New York Theatre Critics' Reviews 1946

Volume VII, Number 26 • Rachel W. Coffin, *Editor* • Year Ending, December 31, 1946

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NEW YORK SUN · NEW YORK TIMES · NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM · NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK POST · NEW YORK DAILY NEWS · NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE · NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

Yearly Subscription $25.00

Published by Critics' Theatre Reviews, Inc., 235 East 22nd Street, New York 10, N. Y.

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"Temper the Wind"

The New York Times

DECEMBER 28, 1946

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

By lifting an episode out of post-war history, Edward Mabley and Leonard Mins have written the most forceful and absorbing topical drama of the season. "Temper the Wind" they call it. Barnard Straus and Roland Haas, both of whom served overseas with the United States Army, put it on at the Playhouse last evening. Briefly, it is the story of a conscientious American colonel in the army of occupation who tries to interpret American policy in a small manufacturing town in Bavaria. Well organized as dramatic material and well acted by an interesting and able cast, "Temper the Wind" speaks some of the few sensible words that have been uttered on Broadway this season.

* * *

Credit the authors with having enough courage to avoid any easy or spectacular solution to their problem. They are recording the difficulties Lieut. Col. Richard Woodruff encounters in his job of denazifying an industrial German town that produced munitions during the war. As it happens, he is personally acquainted with Hugo Benckendorff, the chief industrialist, and he immediately finds himself the center of opposing influences and plausible arguments.

Benckendorff wants to resume full production at once. Apart from his personal interest, a resumption of industry would help a starving and idle town and would relieve some of the American administration problems. An American business man from Chicago, who is a guest at the Benckendorff home, urges Woodruff to help rebuild German industry as one way of rearming the West against Russia. Despite this and other influences brought to bear upon him, Woodruff persists in his policy of denazifying the industry first. That leads to a local riot, the death of an anti-Nazi German and of an American soldier, and other violence. If Woodruff's honest interpretation of his orders achieves nothing else, it destroys the opportunism of the American business man who wants to use Germany against Russia.

* * *

In the course of their drama th authors touch on other aspects of the German occupation that reveal the complexities of the problem. Most of the American soldiers have no heart for their job. The usual demoralizing cant about the superiority of the Germans to the Allies runs through headquarters gossip. The authors represent the inflexible character of the Prussians in a cold and disdainful aunt, played with iron and decision by Blanche Yurka. They represent the implacable hatred of the Czechs in the character of a skeptical though friendly captain, well acted by Herbert Berghof; and the fanatical and treacherous hostility of the unreconstructed Nazi in a grim character played with wiry neuroticism by Tonio Selwart.

Serving as the director, Reginald Denham has put together a competent and interesting performance in the style of realistic theatre. As the troubled colonel, Thomas Beck gives a frank and attractive performance that mercifully spares the heroics. Vilma Kurer acts the industrialist's daughter with a rueful modesty and a depth of feeling that portray the conflicting emotions of the part. There is doubtless more strength in the industrialist than Reinhold Schunzel reveals in his mannered performance, and doubtless more genial expansiveness in the American business man than Walter Greaza brings to that part. The performance is well housed in two suitably designed settings by Raymond Sovey.

If you want to be fastidious about it, "Temper the Wind" as a play has some difficulty in stretching the goods smooth across its dramatic pattern. But that is a matter of no particular consequence in comparison with the fact that Mr. Mabley and Mr. Mins have vigorously stated a complicated political problem without mounting a soap box. Neither they nor anyone else knows all the answers. Relying more on action than eloquence, they have stated a problem in terms of human beings—in the best tradition of the political play. Incidentally, it took them a year and a half to get their play on the stage. That shows one of the difficulties of keeping the theate up to date.

'Temper the Wind.'

Bernard Straus and Roland Haas present "Temper the Wind," by Edward Mabley and Leonard Mins; staged by Reginald Denham; settings by Raymond Sovey; costumes by Anne Hill Johnstone; with Blanche Yurka, Vilma Kurer, Reinhold Schunzel, Walter Greaza, Tonio Selwart, Thomas Beck, Martin Brandt, Herbert Berghof, Charlotte London, George Mathews, Paul Tripp, Albert Patterson and Michael Sovey. Presented at the Playhouse, Friday, Dec. 27, 1946.

SYNOPSIS—The action takes place in the small manufacturing town of Reitenberg in northeastern Bavaria. The time is the present. Act I: Living-room of the Benckendorff house. Monday afternoon. Act II. Scene 1—American garrison headquarters. Wednesday afternoon. Scene 2—The Benckendorff home. Thursday afternoon. Act III. Scene 1—Garrison headquarters. Friday morning. Scene 2—The Benckendorff house. Early Saturday morning.

Journal American

DECEMBER 28, 1946

'Temper the Wind' Opens at the Playhouse

By ROBERT GARLAND

If, either as a drama, melodrama or don't-let's-be-nasty-to-the-Nazis propaganda, "Temper the Wind" were as stimulating as it is contemporaneous, last night's new arrival on 48th Street would have changed the Playhouse's bad luck to better. But I'm very much afraid that more skillful dramatists—or more plausible propagandists, for that matter—than Edward Mabley and Leonard Mins are needed to turn the trick.

"Temper the Wind"—or "Drums of Peace' as it was called last Summer in its Woodstock tryout—is a serious play, seriously presented. Mr. Mabley and Mr. Mins, who wrote it in collaboration, met in the line of duty during World War II which, as tomorrow's history books will come out to say, was a continuation of World War I. And World War I was, as you may remember, the war that was to end all wars.

In their serious play, seriously presented at the Playhouse by the new producing firm of Barnard Straus and Roland Haas, the playwriting overseas men are more than a little dubious about the aftermath of World War II. That, too, may have been no war to end all wars and peace on earth, good will toward men a mocking hymn the angels sang one starry night, long, long ago, while Bethlehem was sleeping . .

"Temper the Wind" does not pretend to know.

* * *

Peace, Where Are You?

What "Temper the Wind" does know—and only too well, I fear—is that hopes, beliefs and ideologies are at sixes and sevens throughout the American Occupation Zone in post-World War II—and, quite possibly, pre-World War III—Germany. To bring their findings into the focus of the average stay-at-home American, the playwrights take him into the living-room of the Hugo Benckendorffs in present day Bavaria.

Herr Benckendorff is there, with a manufacturing plant he is anxious to get back into operation. The Nazis are there, and they are essential to the effectiveness of the key positions. And the Americans are there, and they are, or should be, according to their all-American commanding officer—opposed to any such entering wedge for a possible, an extremely possible, return to Nazism. Peace, it's troublesome!

To further their playwriting—or, if you feel that way about it, their propagandizing—plans, Edward Mabley and Leonard Mins have humanized the problem they wish to represent, condensing it to the size of an evening in the theatre, personalizing it in the more or less stock characters of Hugo Benckendorff, Nazi manufacturer, and his aristocratic sister, his lovelorn daughter and the American commanding officer . . .

Each is both a person and a symbol.

* * *

People vs. Symbols

In the face of some worthy acting in any amount of curious German-American, German-English and German-Actors Equity accents, the Hugo Benckendorffs of the Reitenberg which is in northeastern Bavaria remain stubbornly symbolic. Along with their relatives, their friends and their dubious acquaintances, they seldom come wholeheartedly to life there on the Playhouse stage. They lack a third dimension.

With the exception of Blanche Yurka's aristocratic Sophie von Gutzkow, George Mathews' homesick corporal from Chicago and Herbert Berghof's deux ex machina who wears—and with extraordinary conviction—the uniform of a Czechoslovakian army captain. These, more easily than the others, bridge the gap that lies between a person and a symbol. These are what the playwrights had in mind.

Under the able direction of Reginald Denham, against a believably Bavarian background by Raymond Sovey, Miss Yurka, Mr. Mathews and Mr. Berghof are oftimes helped and sometimes hindered by their surrounding players. Of these Reinhold Schunzel was most highly regarded—against my dissenting judgment — by last night's accentuated audience. They forget that it was a lamb for which the wind was tempered . . .

At the Playhouse, the lambs wear Nazi clothing.

New York Post

DECEMBER 28, 1946

Theatre Finally Gets Word Of German Occupation

By Richard Watts Jr.

Although the American drama has never been famous for keeping up with the news, it received word last night of the Allied occupation of Germany. Despite those who insist that the theatre shouldn't waste its time on topical matters, the effect on it was excellent, for "Temper the Wind" proved to be an interesting and effective dramatic editorial on the aftermath of victory in the land of the Nazis, and it added to the vigor and alertness of the season.

The new drama by two playwrights unknown to me, Edward Mabley and Leonard Mims, indicates in convincing fashion the value of such things as an important theme, an intelligent earnestness of purpose and an honest indignation can have in the theatre. Without such virtues, it would no doubt be exposed as a commonplace enough melodrama. But it is decidedly not without them, and the result is a play that brings a healthy sense of awareness of the contemporary world to a stage always in danger of becoming insular and inbred.

One of the great virtues of "Temper the Wind" is that it does not, as some topical plays do, seem to have been written because the authors decided that something on the subject would have commercial appeal. Instead, there is about it the strong impression that the Messrs. Mabley and Mims wrote it out of their genuine concern and decent anger over a state of affairs that bothered them deeply. It adds considerably to the effectiveness of their message.

Modest and Sane

What the playwrights have to say is neither novel nor startling to those who read their newspapers and magazines with any thoughtfulness, but these same readers will agree that the facts are certainly ominous enough to warrant all the attention the theatre and other mediums of expression can call to them. The authors frankly confess that they do not know all the answers to the questions they bring up, and they state the problems involved clearly and sanely.

As I have said, they have no startling new evidence to offer. They merely feel that the occupation in the American-held section of Germany, which is the part which concerns them, is going badly; that the German industrialists and junkers, who supported and profited by Hitler without technically becoming Nazis, are making progress toward their return to power, using the lesser Nazis, the underground Hitler youth, the fears of their remaining decent countrymen, the weariness of our occupation troops, the American suspicion of Russia and the connivance of a section of U. S. capitalism as their instruments or spiritual allies.

To dramatize their editorial, the authors have created a young American officer, not unlike the hero of "A Bell for Adano," who takes his job of ending the war-making power of Germany seriously and set him against a cabal of open and secret supporters of that war-making power. Their melodrama is not always expert and its characters are not always three-dimensional, but they have nonetheless made it steadily engrossing by the vigor and sincerity of what they have to say.

The production is excellent. Reginald Denham has directed it well, and one of Raymond Sovey's sets, that of a stuffy Bavarian living room, is particularly good. I wish that Reinhold Schunzel were less obvious in his earlier scenes as the German industrialist, but Thomas Beck is excellent as the serious-minded American officer; George Mathews and Paul Tripp are fine as well-meaning, heedless members of the occupation force; Herbert Berghof is splendid as a knowing Czech captain, and Blanche Yurka gives one of her best performances as a scornful, unbending Junker grandmother.

"Temper the Wind" is neither brilliantly dramatized nor remarkably conceived. But it is forthright and honest in its proud dramatic journalism.

New York World-Telegram

DECEMBER 28, 1946

'Temper the Wind' a Drama of Postwar Germany

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

There is some dramatized reporting in "Temper the Wind" on a subject that ought to be uppermost in everybody's mind. The new play animates the desperate problems of our occupational armies in Germany.

It depicts the baffling fight that a sincere, far-seeing officer must make to nourish victory and plant lasting peace. The Nazi is the easiest enemy to combat. It is the bored soldier and ambitious businessman, both Americans, who make things hardest.

"Temper the Wind" offers hope. It is unfortunate that it is not a finer play.

While it is depicting the attitudes of the characters in conflict, it is illuminating. The facts may no longer be news, but the combative thought becomes vivid on the stage, in spite of uninspired language.

Loses Its Dignity.

When the play seeks its resolution in melodramatic violence, it gives a warning against indifference, but it loses its dignity and grows contrived. It is more easy than convincing to prove a point by shooting.

This work tells of the efforts of a wily Nazi tool manufacturer to get his factory in operation, regardless of military regulations. He must re-employ his party supervisors without delay, or he claims the community will suffer.

The army colonel insists on careful investigation, though he knows the family, as he was once engaged to marry the daughter, and was the close friend of her brother, hanged for resisting Naxidom.

An American businessman, eager for a cartel, goes over the colonel's head to speed up the factory's operation.

When the colonel persists, the manufacturer sends his openly Nazi son-in-law to break up a meeting the American officer has called. There is shooting, men are killed, and the Nazis are caught.

This is not very convincing. It is the characters, before they resort to gunplay, that are interesting.

There is the proud elderly sister of the tycoon. She has married a Prussian and scorns her Bavarian family. She has as much contempt for the Nazi, because he failed, as she has for the American, whom she believes must fail. She is frighteningly, deeply a German patriot, superior to politics or time.

Ruthless Opportunist.

The manufacturer is a persuasive opportunist. He has a water-tight excuse for all he has done, and as convincing a reason for what he wants to do. He is intricate, wily and ruthless. He is the type only arbitrary rules can defeat.

His daughter is tragically confused. She has sent her children away to keep them from her Nazi husband. She has no love for her father but is dominated by him.

When the colonel is adamant, she accuses him of being vindictive, though in her most distressed moments she begs to go to America. Finally she turns on her father and seems the only hope among the Germans to aid the occupation's efforts.

The American businessman is a successful and bull-headed string-puller. He is shocked when he realizes what he has been doing. But faced with authority that will force him to stop, he bellows about influence and threatens to have the colonel removed.

Blanche Yurka makes a queenly Prussian, and Vilma Kurer is moving and dignified as the confused daughter. Reinhold Schunzel has good moments as the German manufacturer, though he attacks scenes that should be subtly deceitful with a technique more suitable for sly comedy.

Thomas Beck is a sincere colonel, and Herbert Berghof makes a philosophical Czech officer warm and gallant.

All these and a number of others play effectively sketched characters in what should be momentous circumstances. Unconvincing relations grow up between them and an artificial plot undermines their significance.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 28, 1946

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Battle of the Peace

EDWARD MABLEY and Leonard Mins have not hesitated to tackle a large theme in "Temper the Wind." Their drama at the Playhouse considers the American occupation of Germany and the seeds of a new war, nurtured in part by an American business man. They have something to say in this Straus-Haas production, but they frequently stutter in the telling. One or two scenes of the work are taut with the interplay of characters and ideas as they are subjected to the forces of contemporary circumstances. Unfortunately, they are accompanied by heavy-lidded passages, which are not helped any by some halting acting and direction.

* * *

The central conflict of what rapidly becomes a melodrama involves an American colonel who wants to rebuild Germany upside down, with Nazis at the bottom, and a slippery German factory owner. The latter appeals to the military government official's friendship for his martyred son and former love of his daughter to get his plant working again on a practical and potentially militaristic basis. When he fails, he turns to a tycoon from Chicago, who is not averse to cartels and anti-Russian propaganda. Finally, he gets his Hitlerian son-in-law to incite a murderous riot.

* * *

The melodrama moves neatly to its conclusion, with the colonel winning a small battle of the peace. Where the authors have fumbled is in keeping their ideas and their action parallel. The factory owner's sister, a Prussian who hated National Socialism as much as her new conquerors, is a character who might have become dominant in the exposition, rather than quietly forgotten. The American businessman is too stock for much persuasion. Reginald Denham, in his staging, has settled for the stock aspects of the play.

* * *

Exigent as the plot may be, it permits the consideration of a good many disturbing problems. Thomas Beck, as the colonel, has some challenging speeches as he confronts the German arch-capitalist, an unreconstructed Nazi, the Chicago industrialist or his own men. Reinhold Schunzel makes the lesser Krupp almost too vaguely sinister, but Blanche Yurka has some fine scenes as the stiff-necked Prussian lady. Tonio Selwart is very violent as the unregenerate Nazi and Herbert Berghof and George Mathews give some significant human touches to the offering as Allied soldiers. Walter Greaza is far less successful with the role of the Mid-West tycoon and Vilma Kurer has a shadowy bit in a shadowy romance. "Temper the Wind" is not very articulate or dramatically tidy, but it at least tries to voice matters of great import on a stage.

PM Exclusive

DECEMBER 30, 1946

—Kronenberger

The Seeds of Danger In Occupied Germany

PM Reviews

Temper the Wind is concerned with occupied Germany — with, among other things, dangerous Germans and irresponsible Americans. At this turn of time the theater could hardly treat a more vital subject; and it is all to the good that *Temper the Wind* is honest and intelligent in its approach. What is not so good is the play itself. Since it is principally stage journalism, there is no reason to judge it by high dramatic standards; indeed, in view of both theme and approach, one would like to temper the wind of criticism as much as possible. But the play somehow lacks the ringing force of a really good editorial; and despite effective scenes, it fails to sustain itself as theater. In its writing and its playwriting alike it limps too often.

The scene of the play is a Bavarian industrial town under American occupation. The numerous people involved are less people than attitudes. On the German side are the town's sly industrialist, Benckendorff, who had played along with the Nazis and now wants the Americans to put his locked-up factory back on full production; his proud Prussian sister; his mixed-up daughter; his fanatically Nazi son-in-law. On the American side are a Big Businessman from Chicago named Bruce who, for Big Business reasons, wants Benckendorff back on his feet; several GIs and officers, most of them halfhearted about their work; and Lt. Col. Woodruff, whose job is to organize the town on democratic lines, and who means to see that job through.

Woodruff had once been a close friend of Benckendorff's murdered anti-Nazi son; and Benckendorff feels that if only for old time's sake (though there is also the argument of getting the starving townspeople back to work) Woodruff will start up his factory for him. But when Woodruff learns that the factory is loaded with Nazi executives, he refuses. Benckendorff gets Bruce to use his influence higher up, but Woodruff defies him. Now the balked industrialist has his son-in-law foment a riot in the town, hoping it will get Woodruff ousted. But at the end Woodruff is still on top.

* * *

As a blueprint, much of *Temper the Wind* is lucid and revealing. The methods and motives (the play does not forget the anti-Russian angle) that endanger the peace may not be news, but they cannot be ventilated too often. Nor do the authors of *Temper the Wind* profess omniscience, or dangle oversimplified solutions. Their eggs are in Woodruff's basket, but they know how easily eggs can break; their tone is sharp, but they are not superadministrators issuing orders. With Ibsen they might be saying that the dramatist's business is not to answer questions but to ask them.

Unfortunately for the play itself, it remains too much a blueprint. This may be to some degree unavoidable, since the general set-up is so much the most important thing; but having chosen to provide a drama and not a dossier, the authors undertook to meet the drama's demands. Their play, once the set-up is clearly revealed, largely lacks momentum; it is not progressively stimulating. This is partly due to there not being enough cut and drive in the dialogue itself, and partly to the authors' inability to devise a solid or significant enough "action" — for the melodrama that brings things to a head is too episodic and far too clumsily contrived. I also think that *Temper the Wind* suffers from introducing too many people. The minor characters certainly add to the picture, though several of them add very little; but they tend to make the play wobble and they keep it from ever being taut. The really key figures — Benckendorff, Bruce and Woodruff — should somehow have been welded into a much stronger triangle where theme and theater could have really coalesced.

The production, though adequate, is no great help either. Mr. Denham's direction does little to individualize characters who are primarily types, and overstresses the editorial aspect of the play; curtain lines are rapped out like paragraph-clinchers. But he keeps the play well enough in motion. Among the players, Reinhold Schunzel makes Benckendorff interesting, but is not very subtle; and Thomas Beck is a fairly forceful Woodruff. Walter Greaza is competent but not relaxed enough as Bruce—Big Business is written all over his brow, which is where you seldom find it. Among the other roles, the best performance is Blanche Yurka's, who gives strength and manner to the Prussian lady. There is a very good interior by Raymond Sovey.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 28, 1946

'Temper the Wind' Tries to Win The Peace but Fails as a Drama

By JOHN CHAPMAN

On the credit side of "Temper the Wind," which had its premiere last evening at the Playhouse, one may list such happy and unusual details as the facts that the drama is timely, that it states a reasoned opinion and that it contains some theatrically interesting characters. In a more regretful tone one must report that, in spite of several promising opportunities, the play lacks the sustained force necessary to make it the important work it so honestly tries to be.

Edward Mabley and Leonard Mins, the authors, have taken up the problem of an American Military Government colonel charged with denazifying a Bavarian town. Germany is, in the eyes of some, the shorn lamb implied in the play's title—a defeated nation trying to struggle back to a normal economy. In the eyes of others it still seethes with nazism, still is in the grip of its old rulers. The colonel's own view of his AMG job is that no German must ever fight again—an aim so important to the world that personal friendships must be ignored in order that it may be realized.

How to Win the Peace.

The colonel's troublemaker is a suave and shifty tool manufacturer controlling the town's one industry—a man who claims he is not a Nazi because his son was hanged by the Nazis in 1933. Conniving with the manufacturer— not viciously, but shortsightedly—is an American business man who, for the sake of trade, wants the factory cleared of all suspicion and restored to full operation.

The authors have put quite a lot into their play—unregenerate Nazis, democratic Germans, servant girls on the make for a chocolate bar or a pair of stockings, an embittered Czech officer whose hatred dates back 1,000 years, AMG soldiers who hate their jobs and want to go home and one or two zealous Americans like the colonel who take seriously the work of winning the peace.

Unhappily, the various elements seem like separate items, separate stories in a day's foreign news, rather than the single story a well-knit play must be. "Temper the Wind" might have been another "A Bell for Adano," but it isn't.

Among the players are Reinhold Schunzel, an authentic German; Blanche Yurka in the hazy role of a Prussian cynic, Walter Greaza as a business-is-business man, Herbert Berghof as the colorful Czech, Tonio Selwart as a rebellious Nazi, Vilma Kurer as a good German and Thomas Beck as the high-minded colonel. Nothing wrong with any of them—but they can't pull the play together and keep it moving.

The Sun

DECEMBER 28, 1946

'Temper the Wind' in Premiere at Playhouse —Presents AMG's Problems in Reich.

"Temper the Wind," which Barnard Straus and Roland Haas brought into the Playhouse last evening, is an uneven play on a theme as timely as a newspaper right off the press.

The problems of the AMG in Germany are what its authors, Edward Mabley and Leonard Mins, have brought up for discussion, and considering the topic, it is to be regretted that they have not presented it better in terms of the theater. They take a long first act of almost no action to lay the groundwork, and even though there is some shooting before the final curtain, all of it is out of the sight of the audience and the most important clash of all is heard over a radio.

There are some moments of dramatic force in the three acts, to be sure, and considerable portions of the talk are intelligent and interesting, but there is too much mere discussion for the play's good. "Temper the Wind" suffers also from the fact that at the close, the playwrights have little to offer in the way of a solution. They have held a mirror up to a troubled scene, then stopped.

The story they are telling is of the family of a German industrialist in a town in Bavaria in the American zone. The community is dependent on his plant, a machine tool factory. It has made arms for the Nazis during the war, and thus its owner is having great difficulty in getting the necessary priorities from the AMG that are vital to set its wheels turning again.

Into the town comes an American colonel, who years before had gone to a German university with the manufacturer's only son. The latter had been put to death by the forces of Adolf Hitler in 1933 when he fought their rise to power. How the industrialist seeks to trade on an old friendship to obtain what he seeks and then foments an outbreak against the occupation troops when the colonel opposes him, forms the basis of the plot.

The acting for the most part is better than "Temper the Wind" itself. Reinhold Schunzel is capital as the wily factory owner who can change sides without hesitation the moment he feels it will further his own ends, and Thomas Beck is properly earnest as the idealistic colonel, though his playing becomes a trifle stiff now and then. Blanche Yurka lends the authority of her playing to a comparatively minor role, that of the Prussian sister of the industrialist, who is calmly certain that the Reich is sure to win the peace. She even manages to puff on a cigar with quiet dignity.

Among those seeking to grease the wheels for the German toolmaker is an American business man—and incidentally the play is weakened by the fact that he is too readily pictured as typical of those who have found their way back into Germany. Walter Greaza is completely natural in this role. Herbert Berghof contributes an excellent bit as a Czech who hasn't forgotten Lidice and George Mathews plays to the life a corporal whose greatest wish is to hurry back to Chicago. What slight love interest the play affords is furnished by the German business man's daughter, who had once been engaged to the colonel. Vilma Kurer has the part. In "Temper the Wind" the playwrights have demonstrated admirably that the Reich of today furnishes an excellent locale for a strong play. The trouble is they did not write it.

HERRICK BROWN.

"Toplitzky of Notre Dame"

New York World-Telegram

DECEMBER 27, 1946

Deft Dancing Sparks 'Toplitzky'

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

"Toplitzky of Notre Dame" is a very pleasant holiday surprise. It is studded with youthful talent and good humor and kicks up a swift pace across the stage.

This new musical is more in the tradition of "Good News" and "Follow Through" than of recent shows. Of course it is about football, and it works up to a big game. It is rich with expert dancing, but there is nothing even vaguely approaching a ballet.

It is also ripe material for those who like to quibble about musical books.

Story Not Important.

The story in this case is a highly complicated one. It has a baffling lack of motivation, and its vagaries have a tendency to slow up the show. The best thing to do is accept it at its low face value, forget it and concentrate on the performers.

Roughly it tells of an angel on his vacation, who becomes a football player, is given back his mortality for no apparent reason, and loses his talent for the game.

At the last moment, fellow angels take pity and help him make a great play.

This is mixed up with the tale of two elderly men whose main desire is to have their wards on the Notre Dame team.

With the cast at hand it is a pity that an intimate review was not built, because it is the individual talents that make the show fun.

Sensational Dancer.

A conspicuous standout is Estelle Sloan a cute little brunette who dances like forked lightning. In her big solo number she taps and whirls and flings herself around at top speed until you think she is going to fly apart in all directions.

It is clean precise dancing though, and Miss Sloan also takes very pleasant care of several songs.

As the heroine of the piece, Betty Jane Watson is a pretty love for the angel. She has a lovely clear voice, which she uses well, and stopped the show with a couple of her songs last night.

Warde Donovan looks like a bigger edition of Jack Haley in a Haley confusion as the angelic grid star. He sings pleasantly in a voice that has a peculiar Pagliacci quality about it.

Deft Tap Dancing.

Walter Long sings easily and dances some expert and delicate taps. He is deft and light and seems to throw away the most intricate of routines.

A welcome discovery for theater audiences is Frank Marlowe, who plays a quiet loving farmer who is wangled into playing football.

Gus Van and J. Edward Bromberg are an "Abie's Irish Rose" pair as the old boys who want to sponsor the young players. Van is full of blarney and brogue as McCormack and Bromberg exerts a stagewise manner on the Toplitzky in whose tavern most of the action takes place.

Robert Sidney's dance direction is lively and gay, and probably more animated than novel. And the settings by Edward Gilbert are substantial and bright.

'TOPLITZKY OF NOTRE DAME.'

Musical comedy with book and lyrics by George Marion Jr.; music by Sammy Fain; staged by Jose Ruben; additional dialogue and lyrics by Jack Barnett; dances and musical numbers staged by Robert Sidney; settings by Edward Gilbert; costumes by Kenn Barr; musical director, Leon Leonardi; presented by William Cahn at the Century Theater Thursday evening, December 26, 1946. The cast:

Army Angel	Phyllis Lynne
Recording Angel	Candace Montgomery
Lionel	Harry Fleer
Angelo	Warde Donovan
Mrs. Strutt	Doris Patston
Betty	Marion Colby
Dodo	Estelle Sloan
McCormack	Gus Van
Roger	Walter Long
Toplitzky	J. Edward Bromberg
A Girl	Betty Jane Watson
Mailman	Robert Ray
Leary	Frank Marlowe
Patti	Phyllis Lynne

SYNOPSIS: Prologue: Heaven. Act I, Scene 1: Toplitzky's Tavern, New York City, a September day. Scene 2: A field on the Jersey shore, la'e afternoon. Scene 3: Toplitzky's Tavern, later that day. Scene 4: Toplitzky's Terrace, a late afternoon in October. Act II, Scene 1: Toplitzky's Tavern, the day before the Big Game. Scene 2: Toplitzky's Terrace. Evening, same day. Scene 3: Going to the Big Game. Scene 4: Yankee Stadium. Army-Notre Dame Game.

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 27, 1946

'Toplitzky of Notre Dame' Is A Credit to the B'way Alumni

By ROBERT SYLVESTER

"Toplitzky of Notre Dame" surprised almost everybody in the Century Theatre last night. It started right off like a hit, never faltered, and ended with a bang-up finish. It's a fresh and pleasant musical with a cast of fresh and pleasant youngsters backed up by some sturdy veterans.

If it continues to keep to the pace it had last night, it's the town's newest musical hit. If so, a relative newcomer to the local theatre scene named William Cahn gets the seasonal award for the best production job of the past year. For "Toplitzky" got off to a lame foot in Boston, has been recast and restaged four or five times, has been hacked at and haggled, and apparently had no chance at all.

George Marion Jr. is still credited with the book and Sammy Fain wrote the songs. Of the carload of directors who worked on this show, Jose Ruben gets credit for staging the book and Robert Sidney for the musical numbers. Whoever's really responsible, he did a good job.

Two Good Ballads.

There are two nice ballads which can't miss the hit parade—"Love Is a Random Thing" and "You Are My Downfall"—and three or four novelty tunes which keep things moving. Last night, in fact, almost everything stopped the show.

The story starts on the premise, logical enough, that in Heaven Notre Dame is the favorite football team. The angels are worried about the Army game. A big, handsome angel has a "90 day furlough" coming to him. He decides to enter Notre Dame. Since he can't be hurt, can throw forward passes to himself, and also kick 105-yard field goals, he's a pretty lively candidate for the team.

Meanwhile, a subway alumnus named Toplitzky, who runs a tavern near St. Patrick's, discovers that an orphan boy he has been raising specially for Notre Dame is actually a girl. The vacationing angel takes over for her. Angel and girl fall in love. But the angel is warned that such things are not for him. And when he's allowed to resume as a mortal he finds, at about five minutes before 11, that he needs some help from his old Heavenly pals.

Some Fast Specialties.

All of this is casually and humorously played by J. Edward Bromberg as Toplitzky and by that grand vaudev lle veteran, Gus Van, as a visiting Irisher. Warde Donovan is handsome enough to be an angel, although a real angel can probably sing a little better, and is one of the most welcome juveniles.

The specialties were last night's highlights, however. Betty Jane Watson stopped the show cold with her warm coloratura voice. Walter Long tied it up soon after with some of the best tap dancing of recent years. Before the second act was fairly under way a slight girl named Estelle Sloan brought down the house with some amazing turns and fast, intricate tapping. The chorus routines are tap, too, and at times first nighters must have been reminded of those good Schwab and Mandel college shows of other years.

Gus Van sings come-all-yes with gusto and Bromberg helps him. A big comic named Frank Marlowe takes some crashing, funny falls and Doris Patston floats around as a very attractive, if not quite docile, angel.

"Toplitzky of Notre Dame" isn't the heaviest or costliest musical on tap, and it isn't the product of any first rate imaginations, but it is real good fun. Here's hoping it's here a long while.

The New York Times

DECEMBER 27, 1946

No Score

A lot of earnest young folks and a couple of older ones tried awfully hard to put "Toplitzky of Notre Dame" over the goal line last night at the Century Theatre. But, from where your reporter sat, the plain truth is they didn't make it. To borrow one of the favorites from the Monday morning quarterbacks, they just didn't have the stuff. They moved with precision enough, but the lines—the sports fraternity will please make allowance for the plural—didn't stand up; the backfield never had the ball. If all this makes for gloom in South Bend (not to mention Broadway) let those doughty citizens take comfort from the news that at least in the final minutes, with the aid of heavenly intervention as concocted by the book writer, Notre Dame at least did beat Army.

Setting aside the language of the sporting pages, the idea for this latest musical comedy is one that probably struck someone as being funny in the outline. Toplitzky, who prays regularly in his synagogue for the welfare of the Fighting Irish, adopts a son in the hope that he will play for his favorite team. The son turns out to be a girl, and to make up for it, a guardian angel, on leave from his celestial duties, takes over for the heart-broken Toplitzky. As a mortal the erstwhile angel isn't quite the player he was, but his former associates help out in the crucial game. There it is, as simple as we can make it. On the Century stage, of course, George Marion Jr.'s book complicates matters no end, a characteristic failing of musical comedy books.

As Toplitzky, J. Edward Bromberg is making his debut in musical comedy, but he is not happy in the role. Another veteran, coming off better, is Gus Van, who plays the part of an Irishman lately arrived from the old country. Betty Jane Watson is the girl Toplitzky originally adopted and has very little to do other than sing a few songs pleasantly. Warde Donovan is the angel come down to earth to play for Notre Dame while Frank Mariowe is the comedian of the show. A nod of praise should be given to Estelle Sloan and Walter Long for their fine dancing.

Credit for the staging is given to Jose Ruben, who has tried hard, if in vain, to keep "Toplitzky" on the move.

L. F.

New York Post

DECEMBER 27, 1946

'Toplitzky of Notre Dame' Doesn't Live Up to Its Idea

By Vernon Rice

It is a rather discouraging experience to sit before a musical these evenings and mentally watch the expense sheets go floating by. High costs have not spared the theatre and every time a show is produced in which the ingredients of a musical are involved, staggering sums are expended.

Why any producer should put himself through the mill and come out with so little in return, even with a good song and dance show on hand, is a mystery. Complete mystification sets in when a routine and indifferent musical comedy, such as "Toplitzky of Notre Dame," which William Cahn brought to the Century last night, manages to get produced.

Not that there is anything particularly bad about "Toplitzky." Edward Gilbert's sets are nice enough and so are Kenn Barr's costumes. The cast works itself into a frenzy to put the show over, the dancers dance and the singers sing. But there isn't anything particularly good about it either.

The book starts out with an original enough idea, that of a Jewish cafe owner who is such a Notre Dame football fan, that he wants a son on the team, so an angel (male) on furlough from heaven tries to help him out. When complications set in, they become pedestrian and the book bogs down with its own commonplaceness.

Sammy Fain's music, on first hearing, doesn't seem to be outstanding, though "Let Us Gather at the Goal Line," "Love Is a Random Thing," and "You Are My Downfall" are played and sung more often than the other tunes, so they must be the ones that were meant to be remembered.

J. Edward Bromberg plays his first musical comedy role, Betty Jane Watson left "Oklahoma!" to play the ingenue role and Gus Van gets involved in the proceedings, but they are of little help.

If "Toplitzky of Notre Dame" had lived up to its idea, it might have been a bright and imaginative show. As it is, it is just another one.

Journal-American

DECEMBER 27, 1946.

'Toplitzky of N. D.' Opens at the Century

By JIM O'CONNOR

"Toplitzky of Notre Dame" kicked off last night in the Century Theatre. And then went to sleep until . . .

Big Frank Mariowe, crashing through like a fullback, woke up both the players and the audience at the end of the first quarter with a rousing comic song tagged, "I Want to Go to City College." In this advance, Mariowe received good assistance from the chorus line.

Then Walter Long took the ball, or, rather, the stage, and flashed some of the neatest, niftiest, effortless tap dancing since Bill Robinson used to go "stepping down Lenox Avenue."

And that's how "Toplitzky of Notre Dame," an off-season $230,000 football musical comedy backed by Producer Bill Cahn, managed to gain ground in its premiere on Broadway.

Dancingest Chorus

Now don't go running down the field with the impression that this is a smashing success. It isn't. But although it isn't tops, "Toplitzky" is a pleasant show, with some nice, young principals; several whistlable tunes; and the dancingest chorus on Broadway.

Maybe that's enough.

The Walter Long number was called, "A Slight Case of Ecstasy." But it wasn't the title nor the music that counted; it was those taps by Master Long.

Estelle Sloan, a good dancer in her own right (and in her left foot, too), rendered strong support. Later on she whirled, twirled and pirouetted to success all by herself.

Formerly of "Jacobowsky and the Colonel," J. Edward Bromberg is a good straight actor. But he's no comedian—not even as "Toplitzky." Nor is he a singer. Yet, J. Edward put over a musical number entitled, "Common Sense," rather nicely, indeed.

As is usual in musicals, the plot doesn't seem to mean much—except as an excuse to bring on the singers and dancers.

Loyal Rooter

This one was thought up by George Marion, Jr. It concerns Toplitzky, a New York City tavern keeper, who is a loyal rooter for Notre Dame—although he never saw the Irish on the gridiron.

The angels in Heaven also are on Notre Dame's side, it seems. So they send Angelo, an athletic angel, to earth to play in the Irish backfield against the Army eleven.

Angelo is adopted by Toplitzky; falls in love with Toplitzky's adopted daughter and finally wins the game for Notre Dame by tossing a forward pass from the Yankee Stadium all the way to the Polo Grounds. Or something like that.

You get the general idea?

Betty Jane Watson, late of "Oklahoma," is the girl. Betty Jane is a sweet-voiced singer, but she couldn't out-sing that robust orchestra last night. A little soft music, professor, please!

Gus Van Back

Remember Gus Van, of the vaudeville singing team of Van and Schenck? Well, after an absence of 20 years from Broadway, Vans shows up in the cast as one "McCormack" and acquits himself creditably. 'Twas good to hear Gus sing again. And "McInerney's Farm" was what he sang.

All in all, the players are well costumed and the settings by Edward Gilbert are good—especially that Yankee Stadium finale scene.

Robert Sidney can take a bow for the dance numbers. And, for once, there was no ballet. Rah-rah-rah!

Needs Top Singer

On my score card, the melodies worth remembering are "Love Is A Random Thing," and "You Are My Downfall." They are the works of Sammy Fain.

What this production really needs is a first class singer. Also a top-notch comic, even if they have to send to South Bend for one.

For the summaries:

While "Toplitzky of Notre Dame" is no All-American in the musical comedyfield, it's a pretty good show—with plenty of kick!

The Sun

DECEMBER 27, 1946

RAH! RAH! TOPLITZKY

"Toplitzky of Notre Dame" arrived at the Century Theater last night from somewhere out of this world. The net result is little or no gain for the Irish. At best it is mildly pleasant entertainment. Otherwise it is just another musical comedy with a heavy overlay of Joe College, the sort that's often used as grade B filler in a double feature movie bill.

For humor "Toplitzky" belabors such old staples as Notre Dame's subway alumni in New York, the differences between Jews and the Irish (shades of "Abie's Irish Rose") and the presence of names such as Toplitzky in the Fighting Irish line-up.

The book concerns the trials of an angel who comes down to earth, literally and figuratively, to play for Notre Dame against Army and encounters Toplitzky, a subway alumnus, whose one ambition is to have a son play for Notre Dame. Even as gridiron drama it's a little less than exciting.

Musically "Toplitzky" is undistinguished. The song most likely to succeed is undoubtedly "Love Is a Random Thing," with "I Want to Go to City College" running next. "McInerny's Farm" rendered by Gus Van probably will find its way into the juke box hit parade.

In spite of the many obvious weaknesses in the material at hand, the cast gives it the old college try. Betty Jane Watson turns in the outstanding performance with her singing, particularly of "Love Is a Random Thing." Frank Marlowe as Leary the big Irish farm boy who wanted "to go to City College," also does a creditable job. Warde Donovan as the heavenly agent of Notre Dame victory, is a handsome angel, but is not in good voice. J. Edward Bromberg has the role of Toplitzky, the subway alumnus, and works hard, but is handicapped by the material.

H. E. S.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 27, 1946.

By Otis L. Guernsey Jr.

Too Many Fumbles

A GOOD mechanical job of putting on a musical is lacking in spirit at the Century. "Toplitzky of Notre Dame" satirizes the Fighting Irish's players and subway alumni in a book and lyrics by George Marion Jr., and it is a well rehearsed production with a cast which tries very hard to create an exuberant mood. Jose Ruben's staging, too, keeps the skits, songs and dances coming fast enough to attract the eye. For all these efforts, the material itself is so wan and colorless that only in rare moments is this show able to inspire enthusiasm.

* * *

Marion's book about a Jewish tavern-keeper's affection for the Notre Dame team and an angel who comes down from above to play in Leahy's backfield against Army is very short on chuckles and completely empty of roars. There are a few obvious references between Toplitzky and his Irish friends and one gag in the lyrics about a strapping lad who wants to go to City College instead of Notre Dame, but the ripples of humor are brief and occasional. The score by Sammy Fain has rythm and variety, but the melodies of love songs like "Love is a Random Thing" and "You are My Downfall" are neither haunting nor lingering. Like the snappier numbers called "Let Us Gather at the Goal Line" and "Wolf Time", the manner in which they are sung is much better than the music itself.

* * *

The nearest approach to genuine liveliness here is Frank Marlowe as a slap-happy farm boy who is drafted into playing tackle or something for the Irish. There is only the palest of comedy in the Toplitzky of J. Edward Bromberg and the heavy-brogued County Mayo type played by Gus Van, although both these actors give competent readings of their sketchy roles. Warde Donovan as the athletic angel and Betty Jane Watson as a conventional heroine sing the numbers with more than the usual musical comedy ability; but they are dealing with songs which, like the dialogue, sound as though they had been mass-produced according to a mathematical formula.

* * *

The dances, all modern and no ballet, are fast and well synchronized, in the chorus as well as in the steps executed by Walter Long and Estelle Sloan. Nevertheless they seem humdrum, as do the costumes by Kenn Barr and most of the settings by Edward Gilbert. Ruben's staging, like the rest of the show, does everything that is supposed to be done in musical comedy except create excitement. Produced by William Cahn, "Toplitzky of Notre Dame" is only a mediocre musical which has all of the outer semblance of good fun without any of the inner sparkle to put it across.

PM

DECEMBER 29, 1946

The Subway Alumni Get Licked Again

PM Reviews

For the second night in a row a playwright has called upon Heaven to intercede with his earthbound characters. In this case an angel takes time from his Heavenly duties to plot a football victory for Notre Dame over Army. The result is a big, gaudy musical of the Before Ballet school complete with tap dancers, dope comic and several characters whose presence is rather inexplicable. To its credit are several good tunes, adept dancing by Walter Long and the singing of Betty Jane Watson. But it also has a book, an untidy and not particularly witty affair. *Toplitzky* has a few saving graces but not enough to extricate it from the frantic aimlessness which pervades it.

It is George Marion Jr.'s idea that the building which has been erected at Fifth Ave. and 51st St. across from St. Patrick's has nothing to do with Best and Co. but is really Toplitzky's Tavern, focal point for all of South Bend's subway alumni. Mr. T. has promised to provide the Irish with a football player who can beat Army in the person of his nephew who, however, turns out to be a niece at precisely the same time that an angel (male) arrives on earth solely to help Notre Dame beat West Point. Well, the angel is about to fall in love with the niece and is going to become Mr. T.'s adopted nephew so that he will be legally acceptable to Notre Dame when he is reminded by his Heavenly superiors that such entangling alliances are not for angels. And the Army game only one day away. *Quel* problem! There is also a gentleman just in from the Ould Sod who has a nephew of his own who plays football but, so far as I could determine, they were thrown in as a bonus.

Several capable performers bear down on this whimsy as though they really had something to work with. J. Edward Bromberg, making his musical comedy debut, works hard as Toplitzky but seems undecided whether he is supposed to be a fast-talking straight man or back in *Awake and Sing* playing Uncle Morty. Gus Van sports a broth of a brogue as the recently landed Irishman and makes as much as any man could of a rather pointless role. Frank Marlowe raises a few laughs as a lout who wants to go to CCNY and a cute little blonde named Phyllis Lynne sparkles in two brief appearances. But Warde Donovan, in the important role of the angel, plays as though he were trying to see how long he could hold his breath.

The most satisfying thing about *Toplitzky* is Sammy Fain's score, notably *Love Is a Random Thing* and *A Slight Case of Ecstasy*. It's certainly not Mr. Fain's fault if many of the lyrics don't live up to his music. Robert Sidney has staged the dances with splash and vigor and Edward Gilbert's settings have color and imagination. The principal set, the interior of Toplitzky's tavern, is dominated by a large photograph of Knute Rockne who, from this vantage point, gazes down on most of the stage antics. Throughout the evening he wore a dubious expression So did I.

—JOHN S. WILSON.

"Beggar's Holiday"

New York World-Telegram

DECEMBER 27, 1946

'Beggar's Holiday' A Brilliant Musical

By ROBERT BAGAR.

There were two especially brilliant stars in last night's production of "Beggar's Holiday" at the Broadway Theater, although neither of these was visible, except through his works. The stars were Duke Ellington and John Latouche, the one responsible for the music and the other for the libretto and lyrics.

The piece, more opera comica than musical comedy, is an adaptation of the "Beggar's Opera" of John Gay, which has had, up to now, numerous treatments, but certainly none to better advantage than this in either artistic aim or its accomplishment.

Mr. Ellington's score is a generous outpouring of his individual talent, filled with the spirit and warmth of his music, the pulsing beat of his rhythms, the strength and the refreshing colors of his modern harmonies.

Old Story Up to Date.

Mr. Latoucne has brought the old story up to date, complete with cops and robbers and crooked bosses, a braggart of a gang-leader hero, Macheath, and numerous ladies of the evening. There is also Polly Peachum, a virtuous maid who, like all the women in this particular cosmos, is dedicated to Macheath.

It does not really matter how close Mr. Latouche's libretto is to or far away from the original. But it is almost more than enough that he has struck gold occasionally in his adaptation and always in his lyrics. Together, the music and text combine in as felicitous a wedding as the Broadway stage has offered in months.

So you will hear in this rather tightly knit score a varied expression of the Ellington-Latouche genius, songs of humor, others of gayety and rhythmic charm and still others of deepest brie.

Vivid Personality.

Alfred Drake, the Macheath, is one of the best equipped singers on Broadway. His vivid personality, his manly, agreeable baritone, his convincing acting are not common to all male vocalists, whether on Broadway uptown or farther down among the Metropolitans. His delivery of "I've Got Me" and "When I Walk with You" (this last done as a quasi-duet with Jet Macdonald, whose lighter voice proved an interesting contrast) was thoroughly big time.

The rowdy antics of Zero Mostel always get the proper audience response. As Hamilton Peachum, a boss racketeer, politician and, perhaps, pillar of society, he had many chances to strut his zany stuff.

The nervous, jittery style of Avon Long and the abandoned, deliberate blues of Marie Bryant made excellent foils for each other in "The Wrong Side of the Railroad Tracks," a number which brought wild cheers. And Bernice Parks, as Jenny the voluptuous Madame, did quite well with an insinuating item entitled "Take Love Easy," which, if one is not entirely mistaken, weaves a sinuous course of sous-entendre.

The performance of the score by the large orchestra under Max Meth's direction was most sympathetic, and it is important to add that the orchestrations were done under the supervision of Billy Strayhorn, the Duke's close collaborator.

All in all, a remarkable fusion of talents, creative and performing, culled from among superior white and Negro artists.

'BEGGAR'S HOLIDAY.'

A musical comedy based on "The Beggar's Opera," by John Gay; book and lyrics by John Latouche; music by Duke Ellington; staged by Nicholas Ray; production designed by Oliver Smith; costumes by Walter Florell; lighting by Peggy Clark; choreography by Valerie Bettis; musical director, Max Meth; presented by Perry Watkins and John B. Sheppard Jr. at the Broadway Theater Thursday evening, December 26, 1946. The cast:

The Pursued	Tommy Gomes
Cop	Archie Savage
Policemen	Herbert Ross and Lucas Hoving
Plain Clothes Man	Albert Popwell
The Lookout	Marjorie Belle
MacHeath	Alfred Drake
The Cocoa Girl	Marie Bryant
Jenny	Bernice Parks
Dolly Trull	Lavina Nielsen
Betty Dewy	Leonna Hall
Tawdry Audrey	Tommie Moore
Mrs. Trapes	Doris Goodwin
Annie Coaxer	Royce Wallace
Baby Mildred	Claire Hale
Minute Lou	Nina Korda
Trixy Turner	Malka Farber
Bessie Buns	Elmira Jones-Bey
Flora, the Harpy	Enid Williams
The Horn	Bill Dillard
Highbinder	Jack Bittner
O'Hirister	Gordon Nelson
The Foot	Perry Bruskin
Gunsel	Archie Savage
Fingersmith	Stanley Carlson
Strip	Lucas Hoving
Mooch	Perry Bruskin
The Eye	Pan Theodore
Wire Boy	Paul Godkin
The Other Eye	Tommy Gomes
Slam	Albert Popwell
The Caser	Douglas Henderson
Two Customers	Gordon Nelson and Hy Ansel
A Drunk	Lewis Charles
Bartender	Herbert Ross
Carioca Love	Avon Long
Polly Peachum	Jet MacDonald
Black Marketeer	Gordon Nelson
Mrs. Peachum	Dorothy Johnson
Hamilton Peachum	Zero Mostel
Chief Lockit	Rollin Smith
Lucy Lockit	Mildred Smith
Blackmore	Pan Theodore
The Girl	Marjorie Belle
The Boy	Paul Godkin

SYNOPSIS—Act I, Scene 1, exterior of Miss Jenny's. Scene 2, interior of Miss Jenny's. Scene 3, exterior of Miss Jenny's. Scene 4, at Hamilton Peachum's. Scene 5, a street. Scene 6, a hobo jungle—two days later. Act II—Scene 1, the street. Scene 2, Chief Lockit's office. Scene 3, the jail. Scene 4, the street. Scene 5, Jenny's bedroom. Scene 6, under the bridge. Scene 7, finale.

New York Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 27, 1946

By Howard Barnes

Cold Night for Beggars

FROM the standpoint of size or general activity "Beggar's Holiday" is quite an entertainment. This very free musical adaptation of the John Gay classic has a company which literally crowds the stage. It has effective revolving sets designed by Oliver Smith and colorful costumes. Duke Ellington has decorated it with a huge bunch of songs and John Latouche has explored the humorous possibilities of sex strenuously in his libretto and lyrics. With all these instruments at hand the production has passages of bounce and ribald atmosphere. But the satisfactions of the show are, at best, fragmentary.

• • •

With little more than a nod to Gay, Latouche has cooked up a background plot about gangsters and prostitutes, placing them in such appropriate locales as a brothel, a tenement street, a hobo jungle or in the shadow of a bridge. The melodrama inspires some of the more frenzied ensemble numbers. It goes a-dithering when the proceedings are given over to smoking car stories. Even though Alfred Drake does a valiant job of playing the chief mobster and has some valuable assistance from Bernice Parks, Mildred Smith and Jet MacDonald as a trio of his molls, the work is generally tasteless and undramatic.

• • •

It is at its best, which is all right for a musical comedy, when it sticks to singing and dancing. Avon Long bounds onto the Broadway stage at intervals with Marie Bryant to give the doings zest and musical excitement. Dancing and singing together they give a hint of what might have been accomplished had the various collaborators on "Beggar's Holiday" gone stronger for hoofing and chanting and slower on salacity. Drake sings with power and style and the chorus devises some pretty patterns of jive and ballet. But when Zero Mostel takes over, as the chief interpreter of the so-called wit in the piece, it emphasizes the generally low level of the musical.

• • •

Ellington has been prodigal with his tunes, but he has been stingy melodically. "I've Got Me," "When I Walk With You" and "Tooth and Claw" are pieces which are certain to be hummed around. Most of the numbers are more rhythmically interesting than eloquent. For the dancing they are fine. There is a striking number in Miss Jenny's florid bordello and an elegant climax to the first act in the jungle. Neither John Houseman, who originally staged the show, nor George Abbott, who worked on it more recently, have succeeded in achieving a sustained mood or an engrossing line of action. Mostel appears to be improvising in most of his scenes and the individual encounters are as dreary as the sagging libretto deserved them to be. "Beggar's Holiday" has lively accents, but for the most part they are incidental to a raucous and rather wearing song and dance exhibit.

New York Post

DECEMBER 27, 1946

A Colorful but Confused Show Based on 'Beggar's Opera'

By Richard Watts Jr.

It is not altogether easy to tell why "Beggar's Holiday," the Duke Ellington-John Latouche musical show based on "The Beggar's Opera," is not more satisfying an entertainment. Certainly it is not enough to report that things seem to have gone wrong with it from the start, that there were cast changes up to the last moment, and that several well-known directors have had at it so unhappily that the production opened at the Broadway Theatre last night with the name of none of them attached to it. These are the symptoms, rather than the causes, of the disappointment.

As it is, there is so much that is good about it. It has a great deal of colorful atmosphere and considerable excitement; the Duke Ellington music is attractive if rather reminiscent; the Latouche lyrics are intelligent and the book has its points; the dancing which Valerie Betts has staged is vigorous and striking; the people of the cast are agreeable. On all of these points, this very freehand version of the John Gay classic is above the average.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to escape the impression that the evening doesn't come off. For one thing, it takes too long to get started and, for me, appeared rather too complex in its opening scene. For another, it never quite makes up its mind whether to be social satire, melodramatic burlesque or just plain musical extravaganza, and while such an objection may seem academic it is justified by the confusion of treatment displayed in the show.

Not Slavish

Anyway, "Beggar's Holiday" cannot be accused of trying to be a slavish paraphrase of the original "Beggar's Opera." Save in the names, morals and professional activities of its characters and the general sardonic rejoicing over the amiabilities of vice and crime, the similarities between them are by no means excessive.

The current version of the plot spends a lot of time, I am afraid, on the misadventures in love and crime of Macheath, now a dashing young gang leader in an American city. He gets into trouble with two corrupt gentlemen named Peachum and Lockit, jilts their two pretty daughters, as well as a dubious young woman named Jenny, and is about to be electrocuted for something when the book stops, and he is reprieved to join the three girls who love him.

It isn't a bad plot, as musical comedy narratives go, but it is hampered by the confusion of purposes I have suggested, and it often gets in the way of the musical numbers and the dances just when they are going well. I much preferred the show when, for example, it forgot the book and went in for some fine singing and dancing in a hobo jungle. Then "Beggar's Holiday" is really good.

Among the Players

As the irresistible Macheath, Alfred Drake, who is still remembered from "Oklahoma!" sings attractively, plays disarmingly enough and looks even more like Orson Welles than ever. By far his most important support from the men of the cast comes from Avon Long, of "Porgy and Bess," who continues to be one of the most winning dancers and comedians available in this vicinity.

Of the girls, my first enthusiasm went to Mildred Smith, the only pleasant memory of the recent Negro "Lysistrata," who is delightful as the third of Macheath's jilted loves. The second of the jolly fellow's girls is attractively played by the blonde Jet MacDonald, and the first of at least his major romances, the lady who keeps the bordello, is well enough managed by Bernice Parks, although it is not hard to see why Libby Holman didn't enjoy the role.

The songs I remember most pleasantly are "Tooth and Claw," "The Wrong Side of the Railroad Tracks" and, I believe, "Tomorrow Mountain," and there must certainly be a word for the excellent atmospheric sets of Oliver Smith. There is, as you can see, a lot to praise in "Beggar's Holiday," and I would even include Zero Mostel, as a comic scoundrel, if he didn't work with such fatiguing effort. But the show just doesn't work out.

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 27, 1946

Ellington's 'Beggar's Holiday' Most Unusual Musical of Many Seasons

By JOHN CHAPMAN

"Beggar's Holiday," by Duke Ellington and John Latouche, is the most interesting musical since "Porgy and Bess." It is so far away from the music-show formula that it often loses track of itself and becomes confusing, but for its score, its cast, its wonderful sets and the imagination with which it has been staged it rates extraordinary consideration.

It is easy to make a smash hit musical. All one needs is a tunesmith like Irving Berlin, a lyric writer like Irving Berlin, some kind of a plot and about $300,000—and the thing is in. Any season there is something just as good as "Annie Get Your Gun." Making "Beggar's Holiday" is more difficult, because the formula of hit tunes and a simple boy-girl story has been ignored and a striving for originality has taken its place.

The basis of "Beggar's Holiday" is one of the earliest musical comedy hits, John Gay's "The Beggar's Opera." This tale of a thief and a jailer's daughter has been slightly retained in a story of a mobster of, perhaps, the Chicago gang era. As a story line it is full of faults, but the plot does not matter. In its mixing of Negro and white performers there seems to be no scheme, except that the whites are useful and the Negroes are necessary for Mr. Ellington's music.

Fine Music, Clever Lyrics.

What is important about "Beggar's Holiday" is the Ellington score and its accompanying words by Mr. Latouche. Occasionally the lyrics try too hard and become too clever, but most of the time they are admirable in refusing to follow the Tin Pan Alley pattern. And always the Ellington music — orchestrated by Billy Strayhorn and splendidly played by Max Meth's orchestra—is a delight.

The nearest thing to an ordinary song hit in the whole show is a restful number titled "Tomorrow Mountain," which is a new treatment of the old hobo song, "The Big Rock Candy Mountains." For the rest of the evening Mr. Ellington and Mr. Latouche have tried to fit score and lyrics into the story, and have had remarkable success. Toward the end there is a ballet which has no great reason for being included, so far as the plot is concerned, but it is very well staged and the music for it is extraordinarily interesting.

Best Sets of Year.

The players are pleasant and talented. Alfred Drake sings, looks and moves well as the mobster. Bernice Parks is a sultry sporting-house proprietress. Avon Long, a splendid dancer, portrays another character like Sportin' Life in "Porgy and Bess." Zero Mostel is in there for laughs, and quite surprisingly gets some. The rest of the company, Negro and white, is excellent and numerous.

The settings by Oliver Smith are the best of the season, ranging from alleyways and bordellos to a magnificent hobo jungle. The program credits direction of the book to Nicholas Ray, with whose work I am not familiar—but if Mr. Ray staged "Beggar's Holiday," with all its colorful patterns, he is the best handler of stage crowds since Rouben Mamoulian came to prominence with the play, "Porgy." No less effective are the dances by Valerie Bettis and the costumes by Walter Florell.

"Beggar's Holiday" is an unusual musical. If you are looking for a cut-and-dried hit you can afford to skip it, but if you want something different you should go.

PM

DECEMBER 29, 1946

Kronenberger

A Classic Is Done Over And Partially Done In

PM Reviews

Beggar's Holiday, as the program says, is based on *The Beggar's Opera*. But it is so far from being a mere jazzed-up "revival" that it can best be described as a very laudable attempt to do something really different in the musical field. Exactly what, however, you never find out—for the crushing reason that its fashioners seem not to have known themselves. The praiseworthy thing about their show is that it travels its own road; the highly unsatisfactory thing is that it never fetches up at any destination. Despite energetic and excellent things en route, *Beggar's Holiday* leaves you, and itself, stranded.

Its failure to get anywhere may be bound up, more than at first appears, with where it starts out from. Jumping two centuries to the underworld of today, offering a new book, new lyrics and new music, *Beggar's Holiday* in one sense retains almost nothing of *The Beggar's Opera*—only the names and outlines of its principal characters, a similar enough story line, and (as a kind of memento) the words of one song. This is very little, but for all that it may have been too much, since it has often made for revamping rather than direct creation: for double-exposures rather than clear focus; and for somewhat muddled aims. *Beggar's Holiday* seems, so to speak, to have kept *The Beggar's Opera* in its head without letting any of it get into its veins. Now *The Beggar's Opera* is as 18th century as Hogarth; and its hard, high-spirited satire is directed at that passion for worldly gain which made double-dealing a commonplace, honor among thieves a joke, and the misdeeds of the underworld a symbol of the misdeeds of high life as well. In fact, the highwayman-hero Macheath was meant to be nobody less than Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister of England.

Well, all this might be disposed of as ancient history, except that *Beggar's Holiday*, without putting it to real use, has not quite disposed of it itself. Thursday night the ghost hovered over something that refused to seem very satirical, *could* not seem romantic, and was half-hearted in its melodrama. Nor, raffish as they might seem by musical-comedy standards, did the mobsters, molls and madams of *Beggar's Holiday* catch the pungency, the coldblooded, boisterous gaiety of *The Beggar's Opera*. They seemed afraid to take themselves seriously (which flattened out the melodrama), yet were not projected from any consistently comic point of view. Scoundrelly Peachum, for example, became a mere zany whom Zero Mostel absolutely mauled with his intemperate practices. But much of the trouble lay with Mr. La Touche's book (his lyrics were better). Mr. La Touche showed too much taste for sex, and very little taste beyond that.

But beyond its addled tone, *Beggar's Holiday*—simply regarded as a musical—is very unven entertainment. It takes an unconscionable time to get going, and then it cannot keep going; a lot of it just falls by the wayside. Actually, the show is at its best when farthest from its source, when it is a matter of pure 20th-century jazz and jive. Most of Duke Ellington's score is nervous, rhythmic and individual, and a pleasant relief from stock musical-comedy "tunes." It also fits the dancing, and when *Beggar's Holiday* really comes to life, as it does for the last 20 minutes of Act 1, it is immensely spirited and enjoyable. There are some good shorter stretches, too, and some nice people involved in them. Alfred Drake, who can do other things than sing well, is enormously helpful. I particularly liked Mildred Smith, and the dancing of Marie Bryant and Avon Long; and Oliver Smith's sets are excellent. *Beggar's Holiday* is independent-minded enough to deserve a better fate; but avoiding cliches is only half the battle.

—Louis Kronenberger

The Sun

DECEMBER 27, 1946

'Beggar's Holiday' Proves Tuneful and Colorful, but Dull in Its Book.

Perry Watkins and John R. Sheppard Jr. offered Manhattan's playgoers a brand new version of John Gay's eighteenth century "The Beggar's Opera" last evening. In its twentieth century edition it has become "Beggar's Holiday," and as unfolded in a lavish production on the ample stage of the Broadway Theater, it proved tuneful, eye-filling and colorful, but repetitious and uninspired in most of its book to the point of dullness.

As a result it all added up to a spectacular show that somehow failed to come off. It's a pity, too, for Duke Ellington has composed for it a delightful score that includes some of the best song numbers that Broadway has heard in a long time, and Alfred Drake, who heads the cast, is just the man to sing them. If John Latouche could have equaled this pair in his handling of the old story, there might have been dancing in the streets today.

In the up-to-date retelling Latouche has made Macheath the leader of a gang of whites and Negroes in the slums of New York, and has portrayed the women who are enamored of him as a bordel keeper and the daughter of a crooked politician. It is in the former's gaudy establishment near the water front that Macheath is hiding his fellow thugs as the proceedings get under way and the sensuous note that Latouche sets there reappears far too often for the show's good before the hero has reached the last of his hairbreadth escapes from the law and has landed behind bars.

Near the close of the first act, the author moves Macheath and his outlaws to a hobo jungle on the island's fringes and it is here that the show reaches its best moments. When the big cast is singing in that scene such spirited numbers as "Tooth and Claw" and "The Wrong Side of the Tracks," "Beggar's Holiday" hits a high level one wishes it could maintain all along. The latter song, incidentally, really stops the show. It contains also some of the best of Latouche's lyrics. In writing these, incidentally, he has fared better than in handling his general theme.

It is in the jungle scene too that Drake sings "Tomorrow Mountain," a catchy tune you'll be hearing often the rest of the winter. It sent the first night audience for the intermission believing that "Beggar's Holiday" had at long last hit its stride. Unfortunately these hopes proved false, for the second half of the show contained nothing of the same caliber, with the lone exception of a most delightful ballet. This number, danced to a haunting musical theme in a shadowy setting beneath Brooklyn Bridge, features Majorie Belle and is a welcome contrast to the massed strutting that characterizes most of the chorus dancing.

The major share of the show's comedy falls to Zero Mostel as the politician, and if you find his raucous shouting and wild grimacing funny, you'll at least manage to gather a few laughs from "Beggar's Holiday." At best, however, the show is woefully short of humor.

Bernice Parks, who took over from Libby Holman at almost the last moment, gives a lusty performance as the owner of the brothel, and also has the thankless task of having to sing "Lullaby for Junior," a song in the very worst of taste. Jet MacDonald is pleasing as the politician's daughter and handles her duet with Drake well. It is Drake who carries the brunt of the load and both his singing and his acting is out of the top drawer.

Also included in the assets of "Beggar's Holiday" are the settings, particularly the backgrounds for the Hobo Jungle and the second-act ballet. The producers have obviously spared no expense in putting "Beggar's Holiday" on, and Oliver Smith, who designed the production, definitely merits a bow. It's a shame that Messrs. Watkins and Sheppard didn't have a better book to spend all that money on.

HERRICK BROWN.

The New York Times

DECEMBER 27, 1946

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Let appropriate salutes be fired in honor of Duke Ellington and John Latouche. Using John Gay's "Beggar's Opera" as a ground plan, they have composed a flaring musical play in modern style "Beggar's Holiday," put on at the Broadway last evening. The word "composed" is used here advisedly. For Mr. Ellington, the hot drum-major, and Mr. Latouche, the metronomic word man, have constructed a musical play from the ground up with an eloquent score, brisk ballets and a cast of dancers and singers who are up to snuff.

* * *

No one need pay too much attention to the raffish legend that John Gay invented for eighteenth-century audiences. It has always had more prestige than entertainment. Mr Ellington and Mr. Latouche have translated the footpad Macheath into a modern gang-leader who lives off the rackets of the town.

As a character Macheath is none too credible with his fatal fascination for women and no visible means of support. Macheath is more braggart than hero. But the authors of "Beggar's Holiday" have used him chiefly as the central figure in a gutter gavotte danced to the beat of an original fresh and animated score.

* * *

Not believing in musical plays without singers, they offer Alfred Drake, a good baritone, as Macheath; Bernice Parks, a sultry contralto, as Jennie; Marie Bryant, a high-strutting soprano, as the Cocoa girl with some temperamental night-club numbers to sing. Although Jet MacDonald's voice is light for a major part in a well-orchestrated show, her Polly Peachum is humorous and enchanting. And Avon Long, the Harlem minstrel, sings and dances with the compressed exuberance that expresses the character of most of this show.

Mr. Ellington has been dashing off songs with remarkable virtuosity. Without altering the basic style, he has written them in several moods—wry romances, a sardonic lullaby, a good hurdy-gurdy number, a rollicking melody that lets go expansively. An angular ballet comes off his music rack as neatly as waterfront ballad. No conventional composer, he has not written a pattern of song hits to be lifted out of their context, but rather an integral musical composition that carries the old Gay picaresque yarn through its dark modern setting.

* * *

There are obvious limitations to this style of composing. As a musical show, "Beggar's Holiday" never quite breaks through the restraints of a sophisticated attitude towards music and showmanship. And Zero Mostel's grotesque and sweaty posturing as Hamliton Peachum is no substitute for comic skylarking. There is no heartiness in this close-bitted frolic.

Those are the limitations. But Nicholas Ray as the director, Oliver Smith as the talented scene-designer and Walter Florell as the costume-designer have accepted the limitation of the theme and translated "Beggar's Holiday" into a garish and bitter dance of extraordinary quality. Mr. Ellington and Mr Latouche have given Broadway a score and lyrics we can be proud of.

Journal-American

DECEMBER 27, 1946

'Beggar's Holiday' At The Broadway

By ROBERT GARLAND

If, at the Broadway Theatre, "Beggar's Holiday" had the courage of its unorthodox convictions, today's would be a different story. Let no one tell you that the John Latouche-Duke Ellington revamping of the John Gay ballad opera didn't start out to be one thing and end up by being another. Somewhere along the way, the song-and-dance play had its fearlessness removed.

Therefore, what should have been a bright and bitter satire on the New York City underworld of nowadays, which is not unlike the London underworld "The Beggar's Opera" originally satirized, ends by being something else again. Throughout the years honesty has not always been the best policy, virtue has not always triumphed, the straight and narrow path has not always led to a bed of roses.

Realizing this more than two centuries later and 3,000 miles away, John Latouche, lyricist and librettist, undertook to bring Macheath and Polly, Mr. and Mrs. Peachum, the Men of the Gang and the Women of the Town, and all the John Gay Eighteenth Century others down to date while keeping them full of rum, unrighteousness and riot. It must have seemed like a good idea at the time.

Add to these music by Duke Ellington, settings by Oliver Smith, costumes by Walter Florell, dances by Valerie Bettis and a hand-picked cast that knows its business, and you should have had John Gay's latest and greatest post-mortem doing over. But—

Boy Beats Girls

Well, as "Beggar's Holiday" now stands on Broadway, you have almost that for the first of the two acts into which the song-and-dance play is divided. Macheath and Polly, Mr. and Mrs. Peachum, Macheath's Gang and the Women of the Town come and go their new, yet old, familiar ways full of rum, unrighteousness and riot. They have fun, they enjoy every deplorable moment.

Outside and inside Miss Jenny's, at Mr. Peachum's and in a Hobo Jungle, they love, and loaf, lie and steal, cross and double-cross in the ancient and dishonorable John Gay tradition. They dance and sing, too, making use of the tough yet tender tunes Duke Ellington has bountifully supplied. "I Wanna Be Bad", "I've Got Me", "Take It Easy", "When I Walk with You", "Tomorrow Mountain".

This is something. Something bold, brash and beautifully unlike the run-of-Broadway play with songs and dances. "Beggar's Holiday" is, for the time being, having the courage of its unorthodox convictions. Boy meets girls. Boy beats girls. Boy deserts girls. First act curtain falls on Hobo Jungle with Girls singing "Wrong Side of the Railroad Tracks" and Boy singing "Tomorrow Mountain."

So far, so bad. And that is good. But, between the first act and the second, the conscience which makes cowards of most of us sets in. Satire turns to slapstick. Bitterness disappears. Story-telling falls back on cops and robbers. Zoro Mostel takes over.

* * *

Under-Casting

And it is time that the Voice of Experience told Broadway producers and directors that a night-club is one thing, a theatre is another. Mr. Mostel, who gives Mr. Peachum the floor-show works in "Beggar's Holiday," may be a funny fellow in the small closed spaces of Cafe Society, but he is nothing of the kind in the great open spaces of Broadway Theatre.

As Polly Peachum's pernicious paternal parent, Zero Mostel is an impressive example of under-casting. His Mr. Peachum does not belong in the "Beggar's Opera" as conceived by the dead Mr. Gay or reconceived by the quick Mr. Latouche. On the other hand, the Macheath of Alfred Drake belongs wholeheartedly. I have never seen a better singing-dancing-acting bad man than his.

Bernice Parks, not to the floor-show manner born, manages to keep Manhattan's Copacabana, The Loop's Chez Paree and Hollywood's Ciro's out of Jenny; Jet Macdonald is quite all right as Polly; Mildred Smith is even righter as Lucy and Avon Long is really wonderful as Careless Love, blood-brother of Sportin' Life and whose "I Wanna Be Bad" highlights the early evening at the Broadway.

Yes, if Beggar's Holiday" held on to the courage of its original convictions, this review would be a rave one. But with valor gone and vaudeville substituting, even Max Meth's masterful orchestral direction of Duke Ellington's fine, fresh music fails to keep the early promise of this latest revamping of John Gay's ballad opera.

"Burlesque"

PM

DECEMBER 27, 1946

Lahr Puts a Shaky Vehicle Into High Gear

PM Reviews

No reasonable person would revive *Burlesque* because it is a great play. This baggy-pants variation of the clown-with-a-breaking-heart theme is written very sketchily and plotted along the lines of least resistance. A producer's only excuse for reviving it would be that a top-notch comedian in the burlesque tradition was willing and able to carry the show on his shoulders, personality and technique. Jean Dalrymple is fortunate in having Bert Lahr to undertake this chore at the Belasco for her production of *Burlesque* is fine entertainment while he is on the stage but drags unmercifully when he is offstage drinking and taking pratt falls.

The saga of the rapid rise and fall of Skid Johnson, the boozing comic, gives Lahr an opportunity to employ familiar bits and snatches from his past career both in his characterization and as part of the play and he makes the most of every opening. I can't compare Lahr's Skid with that of Hal Skelly in the original 1927 production, which was before my time, but the fact that Lahr has shaped the role to his own personality is evidenced by the succession of Lahr hallmarks which are injected into every scene.

Aside from Lahr's Skid, the characters in this traditional tale are one-dimensional, if not less. Skid, the principal comedian in a burlesque company, gets an offer to join a Broadway revue. His wife, Bonny, leading lady of the company, helps him get out of his burlesque contract despite the fact that she thinks his principal reason for going to New York is to join a girl there. When she feels that these fears are being substantiated, she starts divorce proceedings and plans to marry a wealthy cattle man. Meanwhile Skid drinks his way out of the big time and he and Bonny are finally reunited during a song and dance number in a new burlesque show.

Jean Parker brings some life to Bonny although she is constantly battling moribund dialogue and the necessity of looking sad, noble and sentimental by turns. The rest of the cast, with the exception of Kay Buckley who turns in a lively performance as a soubrette, is about on a par with the dialogue. The only real assistance that Lahr gets is an amusing recreation of a burlesque show *circa* 1927 which winds up the play. Despite some overly clean and sparkling costumes and drapes, the flavor and cliches of burlesque of that period are there.

In his direction, Arthur Hopkins, co-author of the play, has done his best to make up for some of the deficiencies in his writing. Robert Rowe Paddock's sets are simple and effective and Grace Houston has provided a fine late '20s dress for Miss Parker. But the evening is Bert Lahr's and he works his head off trying to make the play live up to his talents.

—JOHN S. WILSON

'BURLESQUE.'

Play by George Manker Watters and Arthur Hopkins; settings by Robert Rowe Paddock; dances by Billy Holbrook; costumes by Grace Houston; staged by Arthur Hopkins; production assistant, Sylvia Friedlander; presented by Jean Dalrymple at the Belasco Theater, Wednesday evening, December 25, 1946. The cast:

Bonny, leading lady of a burlesque company.....Jean Parker
Sammy, the stage manager.....Robert Weil
Skid, principal comedian.....Bert Lahr
Lefty, company manager.....Ross Hertz
A fireman.....Norman Morgan
Mazie, soubrette.....Kay Buckley
Gussie, a beef trust girl.....Jerri Blanchard
Sylvia Marco, of the chorus.....Joyce Mathews
Rozo, second comedian.....Bobby Barry
Harvey Howell, a cattle man.....Charles G. Martin
Jerry Evans, a song writer.....Harold Bostwick
A bell boy.....Norman Morgan
Stage carpenter.....Michael Keene
Ecdysiast.....Irene Allarie
Tenor.....Santo Sendi
Orchestra leader.....Milton Merill
Girls of the chorus:
Maria.....Joan Andre
Kiki.....Carolyn Boyce
Buster.....Millicent Roy
Sugar.....Romie Rogers
Mimi.....Gene Gilmour
Mitzy.....Darin Jennings
Blossom.....Ruth Maitland
Bubbles.....Jeri Archer
Cuddles.....Eleanor Prentiss

SYNOPSIS—The action of the play occurs some years ago. Act I: A basement dressing room in a Mid-West burlesque theater, February. Act II: Living room of a New York hotel suite, June. Act 3: Scene1: Stage of the Star Theater, Paterson, N. J., September. Scene 2: The opening of Lefty's Burlesque Show, The following night.

Journal-American

DECEMBER 26, 1946

'Burlesque' Revived At Belasco Theatre

By JIM O'CONNOR.

Burlesque came back to Broadway last night at the Belasco Theatre. Not the burlesque which is a form of theatrical entertainment now outmoded. But the "Burlesque" which is a play about burlesque players.

And the greatest of these is Bert Lahr, cast as "Skid," a high class low comic and a lovable clown. Of course, Bert used to be a burlesque comedian himself once.

Truth to tell, there wouldn't be much to "Burlesque" without Lahr, playing his first dramatic role after years as a musical comedy comic, plus an occasional comical turn before the camera.

With his checked, baggy pants, peanut derby and funny falls, Lahr presents a characterization in the great tradition of the stage. Here is a comedian achieving at last his ambition to do a serious role, even though it be far short of Hamlet.

And the role is serious, calling for demonstrations of pathos, humor, degradation, romance, failure, success. Lahr provides them all in a fine exhibition of acting.

Only in the love scenes with "Bonny," who is Jean Parker, his co-star, is he less than excellent.

But give the kid a chance! What do you expect in his first time out as a straight actor? A Laurence Oliver?

Not as much can be said for Jean Parker, the lassie with the classy chassis. In "Burlesque," she really is not much of an actress, although she tries hard—even resorting to singing and dancing, without bringing down the house.

But Miss Parker is nice to look at and nice to have around on any stage.

The rest of the cast, including Kay Buckley, Bobby Barry and Jerri Blanchard, fits more into the Parker category than into the Lahr class.

Loaded with Laughs

The plot of this revival, produced by Jean Dalrymple, is well known, of course. As concocted by George Manker Watters and Arthur Hopkins, in the original "Burlesque," it's all about the burlesque comedian who becomes too good for his partner, rises and shines on Broadway, hits the bottle and ends up on his ear in the gutter.

And who is waiting for him but the little woman with the heart of gold. She gives him a helping hand (instead of the foot); they're reunited as a team; open as stars of burlesque again; and are booked happily on the Columbia Wheel ever after.

This may sound kind of "corny" now, 19 years after the comedy's debut on Broadway. It has seen service in the movies, too. But there's a heart-tug in the action and the play still is loaded with laughs.

Some Changes

Distance lends enchantment to the view. So does time. Some may tell you they remember the late Hal Skelly in "Burlesque" and he was great. If he was, Bert Lahr is greater.

Barbara Stanwyck, of the emotion pictures, had the co-starring role in 1927 and she probably was better than Jean Parker—but not too much.

Incidentally, Oscar Levant had the bit part of a piano player in the original "Burlesque" at the Plymouth Theatre that year. And Arthur Hopkins who produced and staged the original production also staged this revival.

Of course, there have been some changes. Last night's program called Irene Allarie an "ecdysiast" —which means one who sheds.

Shades of Billy Watson's Beef Trust, Al Reeves, Mollie Williams, Billy K. Wells, Clark and McCullough, "Sliding Billy" Watson, Joe Welch, Rose Sydell and Nat Willis (or was it Nat Wills?). And never mind Minsky!

Thirty years ago, when I reviewed real burlesque shows at Hurtig and Seamon's Theatre in old Harlem, they called those limber performers "muscle-dancers." Then came strip-teasers. Now ecdysiasts! How times change.

After a rather slow start last night in the Belasco, the "laugh clown, laugh" theme picked up speed until Bert Lahr closed the second act with the best bit of acting of the evening.

Act III was a clever burlesque of burlesque, even to the grinds and bumps of the chorus girls. And the finale scene clicked to such an extent that the audience came out laughing and applauding. What more is a show expected to do?

Yes, "Burlesque" is back on Broadway. But it's Bert Lahr who puts it over with a bang!

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 26, 1946

Nostalgic Third Act 'Burlesque' Highlight

By ROBERT SYLVESTER

The way to see the current revival of "Burlesque" is to have a nice, long, leisurely dinner and then let the cab driver take his time getting to the Belasco. You don't want to get there too soon. Get there about 10:20 P. M. See the third act. It's wonderful.

The third act of this revival brings back Bert Lahr in his old "you're a helluva judge of distance" act. It shows the disturbingly beautiful Jean Parker with all her legitimately solid underpinning suspiciously false upperpinning. The third act also has a strip-tease dancer who'll bring The Hat out of retirement (if she isn't careful and he isn't discouraged) and it has a real burley-que chorus which bores itself almost to death. It also has what sounds like an authentic six-piece pit band. It couldn't be better.

Up until the third act, this revival of the 1927 hit by George Watters and Arthur Hopkins staggers around like a rubberlegs comic. Lahr never seems to know whether he's an actor or a clown. Miss Parker reads her lines in a shrill monotone. The rest of the players generally behave as though they can't believe they're in a real, honest-to-goodness Broadway stage play.

Mr. Hopkins Misses.

To this reporter, the failure of the play's story development seemed to be Arthur Hopkins' fault. Strange, since he staged the original version, is a co-author, and ought to know more about the script than anybody else. But Skid and Bonnie, as the hammy comic and loyal straight woman, never come alive in the revival until the third act dismisses their problems and throws everybody out on the stage on his and her own.

The story, if it bears repetition, is that of a burlesque comic who gets The Broadway Call, misbehaves himself with success, takes to the toboggan, and is finally saved by the loyal Little Woman, who deserts a rich admirer to re-establish herself—and her man—with old trouping pals. Back in 1927, when Hal Skelly and Barbara Stanwyck acted it, it was touching and new. Today it's pretty corny and not very well developed. Reading over Burns Mantle's synopsis of the original version, it appears that much of the original dialogue has been discarded in favor of less colorful talk.

Last Act Gets Hot.

With Act Three, however, an awful orchestra moves into the meagre Belasco pit. A strip dancer takes off her clothes, showing all the wrong bulges, and tosses them past the moon eyes of a bored chorine. This gal—who is either Carolyn Boyce, Millicent Roy or Ruth Maitland—is purely wonderful. So are all her chorus sisters.

So is Bert Lahr, as the comedy cop. And so is Miss Parker as an old-fashioned soubrette. So is Bobby Barry as a rednose, pratfall comic. So is everybody else, in this act. In this act the whole thing comes to life. It's well worth the price of admission. It makes you forget the first two acts which, with all other faults, also have the gals costumed in 1927 styles and the men dressed as though the producer insisted that they wear everything that anybody gave them for yesterday's Christmas.

New York World-Telegram

DECEMBER 26, 1946

Bert Lahr a Standout in Revival of 'Burlesque'

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

The revival of "Burlesque," which opened last night, is pleasantly nostalgic of the five-a-days of yore, but it comes out rather as a thin first coat of paint that needs recovering.

There is not much in the present production to hold its intensely personal story in any intimate frame of mind. It jerks your heartstrings but it sprawls, and runs pretty thin between its jerks.

Bert Lahr, as everyone ought to know, is a natural for the part of the clown who suspects he cannot stand big time success, and is right. He takes a little guy who is blossoming with promise, and shows how he deteriorates with the bloom. Liquor makes it all seem easy once he is on the main line.

Ingenious and amusing as Mr. Lahr's performance is, it still is a single with a play going on around it. Whenever he is on the stage you are inclined to wish other people would get off.

And this is not meant to disparage the other performers. Most of them are very good, and Jean Parker in particular proves again that she is a highly promising addition to the theater.

Miss Parker, who swam her way through an awkward role in "Loco" earlier this season, paints a seemingly effortless picture of the girl who could get out of the cheap circuits of show business if she did not have an unbreakable tie to the clown.

Miss Parker Genuine.

Miss Parker has forgotten all the simpering she used to be forced to indulge in in wild animal pictures. She projects an understandable and genuine character over the footlights. With no deep resource, she can create a girl who moves you and makes you feel with her whatever she is doing.

When Miss Parker's Bonny tells Mr. Lahr's Skid that he is wasting his life repeating the identical act year after year, she is citing the death knell on vaudeville.

One's interest in the play is reminiscent, for this is the story of a fellow who could do only one thing, and only in one surrounding. It is the tale of show business in a day before radio, pictures and the rare exaggerated stage show supporting a movie.

Skid hit Broadway in a musical, and Bonny caught up with the wealthy cowboy who loved her. Then there is that, by now, inevitable payoff when she has to come back to the act to keep Skid alive, and presumably off the bottle.

Mr. Lahr can not only acquit himself nobly as a Minsky headliner, but can take over a scene written more or less legitimately and make you forget anyone else is around.

That is a point more in his favor than in favor of the play.

When in the last act everyone goes into a Keith Albee program, Miss Parker again illustrates her ability to dominate a stage by dancing and singing with all the air of a first rate, tour-hardened headliner. Whether or not she is an accomplished Proctor alumna, it would be hard to catch her up on her presentation.

Loves the Spotlight.

Jerri Blanchard makes no bones about being a Beef Trust familiar. She is tough about her associates and loves the spotlight. And Bobby Barry is a seasoned hand at portraying the short-statured boy friend.

Kay Buckley plays the blond soubrette who initiates the trouble between Skid and Bonney.

This production of "Burlesque" has an unreined air about it. The spice is overcooked these days, and the me-to-you atmosphere of the whole soup seems very diluted, as if it should have been served in a cup instead of a tureen.

It proves though that Mr. Lahr has a wealth of talent to offer a straight play under more austere direction, and that Miss Parker has a genuine quality for the footlights which few better known actresses can equal.

Otherwise this is little more than the Twenties in lullaby.

The New York Times

DECEMBER 26, 1946

Old Favorite Is Back

Bert Lahr came back to Broadway last night in "Burlesque" at the Belasco, and the news this morning, as you may have expected, is that it is nice to have him with us again. It's especially nice because without him "Burlesque" probably would have been nothing at all. The old hit by George Manker Watters and Arthur Hopkins is showing its age, but with Mr. Lahr around to pull it together it may get away even with its wrinkles. For, let's face it, there doesn't seem to have been much reason for this revival other than perhaps for its nostalgic memories and the chance it gives our hero.

Originally done back in 1927 with the late Hal Skelly in the role of Skid and Barbara Stanwyck as Bonny, you've seen or heard the story of "Burlesque" in a thousand different variations, the story of the tank-town comic urged on to greater triumphs on Broadway by his loving wife, his downfall and return to his first love. It's a sentimental story, as such tales about show business always are, and there's no denying that it will always have its moments no matter how corny. What hurts "Burlesque" most, however, is that in terms of the present its talk is stilted as are most of its roles. And when Mr. Lahr is offstage it almost goes to pieces. But, then, he isn't off for very much and when he's on the set doing "Is Everybody Happy" and his vaudeville akit in the last act, "Burlesque" is considerable fun.

Playing opposite Mr. Lahr is Jean Parker and while for most of the way she does as well as the role will allow, she's at her best in the final scenes, singing and dancing with real verve. Jerri Blanchard as Gussie, a Beef Trust girl, handles the role in the proper comic vein, as does Bobby Barry his part as another comedian. And Kay Buckley as Mazie, the soubrette, is satisfactory, too. Mr. Hopkins directed, as he did for the original production, and his handiwork is evident. Robert Rowe Paddock's sets are properly in keeping with the play and the period. But, after all the credits have been handed out, it's still Mr. Lahr's evening.

L. F.

New York Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 26, 1946

By OTIS L. GUERNSEY Jr.

Still "Big Time"

THE inimitable clowning of Bert Lahr makes most of the newest "Burlesque" an engaging one-man show. This Jean Dalrymple revival of the play by George Manker Waters and Arthur Hopkins, about the private lives of ecdysiasts and baggy-pants artists, gets off to a slow start, but just before it falls altogether, Lahr's collection of antics, facial expressions and familiar routines picks it up and paces it out to an altogether uproarious finish. Despite a lack of spontaneity in both direction and supporting performances, the comedian's energetic and determined portrayal of an oldtime burlesque comic makes the show at the Belasco shine with good humor.

* * *

For a little more than an act this script concerns itself with a show business couple whose marriage is ruined by the husband's advancement from provincial grind houses to Broadway; and in these earlier sequences the play is so insipidly performed that not even the backstage color has any great degree of authenticity. Early in the second act Lahr takes command, however, and from then on he turns every trick admirably. While the other characters on the stage do virtually no more than sit in their places and watch him, he rolls about in the free abandon of the slightly tipsy character he is supposed to be, delivering gags and doing song-and-dance acts, lifting up the show with what is essentially a vaudeville turn with occasional allusions to a plot.

* * *

The grand finale to these doings is an affectionate cartoon of burlesque itself, a short but marvelously accurate take-off of that special entertainment form which is not given a home in this city. The Belasco's own burlesque show comes complete with hot music, a deadpan rag-doll chorus, a wax-moustached tenor, a stripteuse (considerably restricted, of course) and Lahr himself as a comedy cop doing a scene in one with a sparsely clad chorine. Mr. Hopkins's staging of his own script is rather dull elsewhere; but here it has created an excellent parody of those well-remembered Forty-second Street musicals. Only in the last scene does the star get much of a helping hand from his show, and the result is a climax of genuine hilarity.

* * *

As the actress-wife who urges her husband on from burlesque to the promised land of Lee Shubert musicals, only to find that Broadway success breaks up their much-valued marriage, Jean Parker does not seem to be quite comfortable in a performance which lacks the breadth necessary to make one believe in her and her emotions. The most effective portrayals among the smaller roles are the soubrette played by Kay Buckley and a dark, large-eyed but nameless chorine who silently but exactly expresses the boredom of the burlesque hoofer even on an opening night. The lion's share of the credit for a happy ending, however, belongs to Lahr, who is equally adept at the broadest wisecrack or a brief imitation of a drunk in the last stages of demoralization. Fortunately for the current revial of "Burlesque," he never fails to deliver the goods.

New York Post

DECEMBER 26, 1946

'Burlesque' Brings Back Bert Lahr With Jean Parker

By Vernon Rice

There is very little point of pondering on the thought of what Jean Dalrymple's production, or any other new production, for that matter, of the George Manker Watters-Arthur Hopkins comedy "Burlesque" would be like without Bert Lahr and Jean Parker, for the play, which was first done in 1927 with Hal Skelly and Barbara Stanwyck, has Mr. Lahr and Miss Parker as Skid and Bonny, and the Belasco, where it opened last night, was filled with Christmas warmth and good cheer.

Skid, you remember, is the burlesque comic, with a heart of gold and a taste for liquor, and Bonny is the leading lady of the troupe and the sweet, forgiving wife of Skid. They hit only the tank towns and that's all right with Skid, but not with Bonny, and when he has an offer to play in a Broadway show, it is she that sees that he takes it.

He goes to the city and makes good and an old chorus girl friend, as well, and takes to the bottle as he never did before. Bonny decides he isn't worth the trouble, and files suit for divorce to marry a big cattle man from the West. She is called in the last minute, however, to try to sober him up before an opening of another second-rate show, and they realize that he is no good without her and that she likes it better with him than without him. They take up where they left off, hoofing and cracking jokes together.

Love in Greasepaint

It's a simple tale, not too well told, but it's filled with honest sentiment and glamorized backstage atmosphere. Love covered with greasepaint and trimmed with sequins has always had an especial appeal and always will.

Love with Bert Lahr around can also become a riot, but the comedian has some new tricks mixed in with his old ones, and he has his moments of touching tenderness and eloquent emotions. And no one can get better laughs than he does. It was a very good Christmas present Miss Dalrymple gave to Broadway last night when she brought Lahr back to its fold.

Jean Parker showed the street what her potentialities were earlier in the season in "Loco." Last night she fulfilled her first promises in her appealing portrayal of Bonny, and made some new ones. She now shows she's a good bet for musical comedy. The theatre has gained in Hollywood's loss.

Arthur Hopkins again staged the comedy, emphasizing the second act party scene in such a manner that the audience forgets that it's the audience and becomes a part of the festivities. His direction of the show scene, combined with dances staged by Billy Holbrook, made one almost long for the good old days of burlesque.

As a play "Burlesque" may not be the best in the world, but it does bring Bert Lahr back to the theatre, and serves as another vehicle in which Jean Parker can display her wares, and for those things it should be commended.

The Sun

DECEMBER 26, 1946

'BURLESQUE'

Jean Dalrymple dipped back nearly two decades into the past last evening as she made Broadway a Christmas present of a revival of one of the famous comedy hits of yesteryear, "Burlesque" by George Manker Watters and Arthur Hopkins.

The Bonnys and the Skids and the Mazies of the burlesque wheel hadn't yet given up their losing battle with the radio and the movies, and were still barnstorming their way across the land in September of 1927 when Hopkins first offered New Yorkers a chance to laugh and shed a tear or two over the sentimental story of the hoofing comedian and his loyal wife. The playgoers of that day loved it. They cheerfully overlooked the fact that its plot creaked now and then and that it occasionally went overboard in its moments of pathos as they reveled in its dramatic and moving second act and avidly waited to see if the faithful Bonny could save Skid from the gutter.

As Miss Dalrymple placed the old play on the stage of the Belasco Theater last night, with Bert Lahr and Jean Parker in the roles in which the late Hal Skelly and Barbara Stanwyck once won fame, it showed its age. Its flaws are more apparent than ever, and the fact that the part of the theatrical world about which Watters and Hopkins were writing has passed into history does not help either. Her production does demonstrate, however, that the famous second act is still highly effective theater, and that some of its scenes are still able to stire chuckles, with now and then a lump in the throat, too.

In an effort to give the play a little extra fillip to present day audiences, Miss Dalrymple has introduced into the third act a tongue in the cheek version of some of the turns in which burlesque audiences once used to delight. It is good fun, and particularly when Lahr is portraying a dumb comedy cop interviewing a strip teaser, it is hilarious. It does break the mood of the play, however, and detracts from the effectiveness of the final curtain. On that score the wisdom of its insertion is at least debatable.

As Skid, who skyrockets out of burlesque into Broadway stardom only to drink himself out of a job, Lahr is excellent, catching in fine style the shifting moods of the somewhat thick witted comedian and making him a very real and appealing figure. The old timers are going to miss the nimble feet of Skelly, however, in the tragic dance that climaxes the second act.

They are going to miss, too, the vivid and moving personality that Miss Stanwyck in her pre-Hollywood career made of the warm hearted Bonny. Miss Parker, making the trip from filmdom to Broadway, is uneven in the part, handling some of her scenes effectively, but not the character as a whole. Kay Buckley is properly brassy as Mazie, the soubrette, and Jerri Blanchard makes an amusing Guessie, the Beef Trust girl, especially in the burlesque interlude. Ross Hertz is effectively natural as *Lefty*, the company manager. None of the cast matches Lahr, however. The evening's honors are definitely his.

HERRICK BROWN.

"Lovely Me"

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 26, 1946

'Lovely Me' Is Just Mistaken Identification

By DOUGLAS WATT

Despite the almost continual lament of a theatre shortage, an indecent number of sad little vulgarisms such as last night's "Lovely Me" manage to soil stages each season. This one is at the Adelphi for the time being.

From its narcistic title right down to its six-toed feet, it is an unpleasant thing to encounter. Concerned with the strident efforts of an aging and indigent entertainer to make a dull but presumably advantageous marriage, it is a catalogue of worn jokes, depressing situations and minor obscenities.

For a sample, there are the two pajama-clad ex-husbands found by the prospective suitor in the lady's apartment. Then, there is the junior-miss daughter who marries a kennel-keeper who turns out to be an heir. About all else I think you'll want to know is that the comic Russian is named Stanislaus Stanislavsky and the breezy press-agent is called Mike Shayne.

Such versatile performers as Luba Malina, Mischa Auer, Millard Mitchell and Reynolds Evans make several unsuccessful attempts to enliven things. Miss Malina, for example, sings two songs with admirable energy but to little purpose.

That the Misses Susann and Cole undoubtedly consumed several months working over "Lovely Me" is only further evidence of the extremes to which today's throbbing realities are likely to drive the over-sensitive.

'LOVELY ME.'

Comedy by Jacqueline Susann and Beatrice Cole; directed by Jessie Royce Landis; setting designed and lighted by Donald Oenslager; costumes by Eleanor Goldsmith; songs by Arthur Siegel and Jeff Bailey; presented by David Lowe at the Adelphi Theater Wednesday evening, December 25, 1946. The cast:

Irving	Arthur Siegel
Auntie	Barbara Bulgakov
Peggy Smith	June Dayton
Matilda	Joyce Allan
Bonny	Paul Marlin
Natasha Smith	Luba Malina
Mr. Forrest	Houston Richards
Thomas van Stokes	Raynolds Evans
Stanislaus Stanislavsky	Mischa Auer
Mike Shane	Millard Mitchell

SYNOPSIS: The scene is the living room of Natasha Smith's hotel apartment on Central Park South, New York City. Act I, October, 1946. Act II, Scene 1—Three days later. Scene 2—Late that night. Act III. The following morning.

New York Post

DECEMBER 26, 1946

Luba Malina Scintillates In 'Lovely Me' Opening

By Elsar W. Peterson

Luba Malina's scintillating, bombastic personality predominates through much of "Lovely Me," which opened last night at the Adelphi Theatre. Jacqueline Susann and Beatrice Cole have written a very light comedy on the problems of a second-rate songstress in keeping up a New York deluxe apartment and caring for her family, which includes an aunt, a daughter and a couple of ex-husbands and at the same time cultivating a new love affair.

Miss Malina, exquisitely gowned and groomed, does a very satisfactory piece of work as Natasha Smith, the waning entertainer. She is onstage almost entirely throughout the play, and her exuberant vitality carries it along. She sings two songs during the performance and the first, "Life Can Be Beautiful," is done well, with a great deal of restraint. In the second song, "Lovely Me," from which the title is evolved, Miss Malina overdoes the piece and loses the essence she established with the earlier number.

Playing the roles of her two ex-husbands, Mischa Auer (as a flag-pole sitter) and Millard Mitchell (as a press agent who has just returned to civilization after having been lost two years on tour with "The Student Prince") do not have much material to work with. Reynolds Evans, as Natasha's newest interest, is well cast and turns in a creditable performance. Amongst the juveniles, Paul Marlin, a refreshing newcomer, June Dayton and Joyce Allen give fully good performances. Late in the second act, Miss Dayton and Mr. Marlin portray a very human love scene which was warmly received by last night's theatregoers.

Arthur Siegel, co-author with Jeff Bailey of the songs in the comedy, pops in and out of the play as Natasha's musical protege without uttering a single line of dialogue. Barbara Bulgakov gives a fair performance as Auntie, and Huston Richards appears as the hotel manager.

All in all, the comedy is loosely written, with a series of stock gags and situations, all of which were kindly applauded by the Christmas Night audience.

The New York Times

DECEMBER 30, 1946

Not So Attractive

There are some funny passages and a few bright lines in "Lovely Me," which was unwrapped at the Adelphi Theatre last night, but generally speaking its humor is transitory and more often than not just plain hackneyed. Two young ladies, Jacqueline Susann and Beatrice Cole, both of whom were actresses before turning to writing, are the authors of the piece, which, until a week or so ago, was entitled "The Temporary Mrs. Smith." They are telling the old story of a much-married wife, but on this occasion with little amount of comic inventiveness. Luba Malina, she of the dark brown eyes, who is more usually associated with the musical comedy form of entertainment, is portraying the role of the crack-brained wife, while Mischa Auer and Millard Mitchell are two of a coterie of husbands.

The plot of "Lovely Me" is not one to tax mental resources. The story revolves about a Russian night-club singer, formerly of the screen, who is trying to make both ends meet. She lives in a sumptuous apartment on Central Park South and receives an eviction notice when she falls three months behind in rent. Besides, she has a precocious daughter whom she would like to send to Harvard and an old aunt whom she must support, for one reason or another. She is about to resolve her problem by acquiring a multimillionaire for her fifth husband when the two former spouses arrive to complicate matters.

Probably the chief weakness with the script is that it does not quite make up its mind what it is to be—comedy, farce or just a sentimental escapade. Most of the situations are unreal and the humor is wrung out forcibly. For laughs there are a character who continuously plays a piano, resembling faintly one of the famous Three Stooges, but who never speaks; a dog lover who carries his fancy to a ridiculous point; a brat who gets in everyone's way and a cloying juvenile romance.

For the most part the players are doing as well as can be expected. In the role of the wife with a penchant for husbands, Miss Malina is at once a minx of boiling tempers and formidable rages. Her part, however, has no more substance than tissue paper. Mr. Auer, the sad-faced comedian of the films, has practically nothing to do, and the same goes for Millard Mitchell, who ordinarily gives a good account of himself. Jessie Royce Landis has staged the offering in monotone fashion and Donald Oenslager has provided a -efulgent setting. L. C.

Journal American

DECEMBER 30, 1946

'Lovely Me' Offered At Adelphi Theatre

By ROBERT GARLAND

If so theatre-minded a gentleman of distinction as Vinton Freedley could not make a go of this Jacqueline Susann-Beatrice Cole collaboration with Francine Larrimore as star, how could so inexperienced a newcomer as David Lowe hope to succeed with Luba Malina as featured player? Not that Miss Malina is unworthy of the sayings and situations the Misses Susann and Cole have, out of their fumbling as play-makers, provided. As a matter of report, she is too good for them. And, as there is no need to tell you, so was Miss Larrimore when she tested them out of town.

Under the title of "The Temporary Mrs. Smith," Francine Larrimore, whose skill as a non-song-and-dance performer is no matter for argument, could do nothing with the piece's silly sayings and sillier situations. So it would seem to follow that, under the title of "Lovely Me," Luba Malina, whose vim, vigor and visibility as a song-and-dance performer are Broadway knowledge, was also bound to fail. Even with a couple of songs to help her, she failed night before last at the Adelphi. Heaven knew it was not for lack of trying...

On excellent authority Jacqueline Susann and Beatrice Cole are said to have gone off to the country and written "Lovely Me" in two weeks' time. At the Adelphi Saturday night I was wondering what on earth they could have done to fill out that fortnight!

New York World-Telegram

DECEMBER 30, 1946

'Lovely Me' a Roistering Farce

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

"Lovely Me," which opened Christmas night along with several other shows, is a rowdy, bawdy farce that stops at nothing for a laugh. Saturday was the first opportunity I had to see it.

It brings up nearly every joke you have ever heard. It also uses nearly every situation used for a blackout sketch in a revue since before Ziegfeld.

This is the sort of show for which you had better leave your inhibitions at home. Not that it is shocking, for it is not sharp enough to be. But you have to be willing to accept anything for the sake of a laugh or you will simply be uncomfortable.

Plenty of Bellowing.

Apparently there are plenty of people in that state of mind for the holidays. Saturday the audience did a good deal of bellowing. And it made frequent remarks in intermissions to the effect that critics did not know what they were talking about.

This is the second time this season that multiple husbands have been chosen as the theme of a show. "Park Avenue" beat the idea to death. "Lovely Me" mauls it with less wit and taste but more variety.

Natasha, a night club singer down on her luck, has a chance to catch a millionaire. Her two former husbands turn up just as she sees hope for her new prospect. Out of the kindness of her heart she lets the two ex-husbands stay in her apartment because they have no place to sleep.

You really do not have to know any more about the play than that to guess the developments.

Heavy-handed Farce.

The situations are frankly farcical, and they are clowned by the cast with the sort of physical strength it would take to hurl a bag of cement.

Whenever Luba Malina exits the show develops instantaneous anemia. As the robust singer she plays with compelling energy.

Miss Malina is better off when she is not singing, as her satire is inclined to be little more than exaggeration. But that can perhaps be forgiven, since the point of the play is that Natasha is reasonably unemployed.

Millard Mitchell and Mischa Auer are the two cast-off husbands. Mitchell as a press agent comes off better than Auer, who portrays a flagpole sitter.

Reynolds Evans is dry and solemn as the new catch, and June Dayton is appealing as Natasha's daughter.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 26, 1946

Malina and Auer Head Comedy at Adelphi

By JOE PIHODNA

UNFORTUNATELY it doesn't matter how good the players are or how many tricks of the trade they know they make a play lick. The playwright, or in this case the playwrights, are eventually the ones who get the plus or minus signs. Last night at the Adelphi Theater for want of knowledge of stage-writing carpentry a play called "Lovely Me," formerly known as "The Temporary Mrs. Smith," hardly got anywhere in spite of the ministrations of players who know where third base is situated.

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Although Millard Mitchell, one of the theater's most expert farceurs, timed his gag lines almost to perfection, he was on the losing side. Time and again he was lighting damp firecrackers. This sort of thing is not only discouraging to the actor, the audience which always goes more than half with anything was also losing out on the deal, Luba Malina, who is nice to look at from any angle, and Mischa Auer, who can be held in bounds on occasion, were having a tough struggle with the script. That is, they weren't doing well up through the middle of the third act when this reviewer was forced to leave. The curtain went up ten minutes late and there was a bit of trouble getting the first-nighters back to their seats between the first and second acts.

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Bad manners and players' troubles to one side, the authors, Jacqueline Susann and Beatrice Cole, bounced up with a conceit about a mad Russian family which combines unsuccessfully two formerly successful farce formulas. That is, there are overtones of "Room Service" and "Junior Miss." Two young girls motivated the plot more or less and two former husbands run through doors while the hotel manager tried to keep his accounts straight.

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Every so often a line catches fire in "Lovely Me," but that is because of its reminiscent quality rather than through any inspiration of the authors. Miss Malina is dressed to the hilt and she has the carriage to show off the fancy clothes. If this observer had anything to do with the production, (and thank goodness he didn't), he would not allow an expert player like Mitchell to appear starting in the second act. No play has been written where a good actor could not be written into the first act.

The Sun

DECEMBER 26, 1946

'LOVELY ME' OPENS

Christmas night was brighter and merrier in many places in New York than it was in the Adelphi Theater. David Lowe was a parsimonious and unconvincing Santa Claus in presenting the town with a thankless gift presently called "Lovely Me," originally billed in Philadelphia as "The Temporary Mrs. Smith." Known by any other name, it would still be rather dull and dreary.

Christmas charity commends the quick recording of the indubitable fact that an adequate cast strove mightily and sometimes successfully to make much out of little. Given a vehicle of strength and beauty, some of the players, particularly young June Dayton, named for the month and the town in Ohio of her birth, would have ridden to glory last night.

The story, such as it is and for what it is worth, deals with the monetary and romantic tribulations of multi-divorced Natasha Smith, whose efforts to marry a supposed millionaire are thwarted for a time that seemed interminable to some by the reappearance of two divorced husbands. Her lovely daughter, Peggy (June Dayton), saves the day and, incidentally, saves part of the play.

An attempt, not too successful, was made to turn Donald Oenslager's authentic Central Park South modern apartment set into another madhouse of the "You Can't Take It With You" type by introducing into it a pet dog, a flagpole sitter, a theatrical press agent, a kennel boy, a PM-reading auntie, a dazed symphonic composer, a stodgy dog fancier and other odd and occasionally interesting characters.

Luba Malina, Mischa Auer and Barbara Bulgakov added a Russian flavor to the proceedings. Miss Malina, as the sexy and slinky Mrs. Smith, seemed overexuberant and acrobatic in descending to vaudeville slapstick. She shouted two sultry songs that found favor with a Christmas audience that appeared to be mildly amused by the slight divertisement, possible because it was Christmas night and all seemed right with the world. Auer was his usual deadpan self in slapstick accompaniment to Miss Malina. Millard Mitchell was adequate as the Broadway press agent former husband. Reynolds Evans was the timid and hard-to-get pseudo-millionaire.

The Adelphi, then known as the Craig, opened just eighteen years ago on Christmas Eve and her stage has seen many better and some worse plays than "Lovely Me." Its second act of ancient bedroom farce flops perceptibly, but its first and final acts present fairly good comedy. It is a pleasant little piece that might make the grade in summer stock.

R. E.

PM

DECEMBER 27, 1946

—*Hague*

'Lovely Me' Maligns the Lovely Malina

PM Reviews

Luba Malina is a highly ornamental and inflammable young lady who, given half a chance, can fill a stage with vitality and humor. She can ogle, shake a torso and wear revealing gowns with the sexiest of them; and she can yodel, point a line and time a laugh with the funniest. Christmas night she gave her all—well, nearly all—trying to put over a flat and unsavory suet pudding of a farce called *Lovely Me*. But neither her labors nor the frantic efforts of Mischa Auer, Millard Mitchell and the rest of a hard-working cast could make this sodden, warmed - over dish more than intermittently palatable. Write off the whole business as one of those minor nuisances committed by the commercial theater in the name of entertainment.

Lovely Me revolves about a tampermantel Russian performer named Natasha Smith. Having put a Hollywood career and four husbands behind her, she is currently looking for a night-club job and a fifth victim. About to be "convicted" (as she quaintly puts it) from her New York hotel apartment for neglecting to pay three months' rent, she fastens on a Mr. von Stokes, the supposedly wealthy head of a dog-lovers' club called the "Tail-Bumpers." But of course two of Madame's ex-husbands — one a flagpole-sitter turned magician, the other a press agent for a road company of *The Student Prince* — move in and complicate things till well after 11 o'clock. Also constantly about the house are a half-witted composer-pianist, a thick-accented character called Auntie, who serves everyone coffee at the drop of a hat, and an irritating trio of teen-agers right out of *Junior Miss* and *Kiss and Tell* — Madame's daughter, her boy friend and her card of a girl friend, Matilda. Matilda is one of those stage girl friends who never seem to have a home of their own. Mix them all together with hackneyed farcical situations, stale vaudeville gags and some very arch direction—and you can't win.

Miss Malina sails through it all valiantly. On two occasions she hurls not-very-bright songs at the audience, the second giving her a chance to do everything but take off her clothes. Mr. Auer has a few amusing moments—as a magician frightened by the ease with which he can make coins disappear and in a scene where he practices the sawing-a-woman-in-half trick on Matilda. He never completes the job, unfortunately. Mr. Mitchell tries hard to enliven a lengthy sequence where he struggles to make a bed out of two chairs and Reynolds Evans is believable enough as Mr. Tail-Bumper.

The only really happy member of the cast is songwriter Siegel. He sits unconcernedly at the piano throughout most of the proceedings without having to utter one of the authors' lines.—ROBERT A. HAGUE

"Wonderful Journey"

Journal American

DECEMBER 26, 1946

'Wonderful Journey' Opens at the Coronet

By ROBERT GARLAND

It has taken the so-called legitimate translation of Columbia Picture Corp.'s "Here Comes Mr. Jordah" four months and four days to get from the Bucks County Playhouse on the Delaware to the Coronet Theatre on Manhattan. Last August, in the State of Pennsylvania, it was known as "Heaven Can Wait" and Sidney Blackmer, Donald Murphy, Philip Loeb and Wallace Acton were excellent in it.

Last night, in the City of New York, it was "Wonderful Journey" and Mr. Blackmer, Mr. Murphy, Mr. Loeb and Mr. Acton were still in it. And quite as excellent! So if, under a new title and in urban surroundings, the picture-into-play loses some of its suburban freshness, the fault is none of theirs. But, in spite of their coordinated efforts, the journey now diminishes in wonder as it goes along.

Somehow, somewhere, along the line, somebody has tampered with the second half of "Wonderful Journey." Or, if not, something has happened to the latter part of Harry Segall's picture-into-play. In the ninety make-believe days which elapse between the first act and the second, comedy becomes farce, fantasy becomes factuality. Which encompasses Mr. Jordan.

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Wanders Away

Up on a screen, there or anywhere, "Here Comes Mr. Jordan" was a metaphysical comedy. Down on a Bucks County stage, it was a metaphysical farce. But always was it fantastical. Last night, at the Coronet, the opening half remained occult and slapsticky, but the closing half went pedestrian and wandered away in all directions, including that of a prosaic dressingroom in some Madison Square Garden.

Until prose and pedestrianism set in, Mr. Jordan remains the semi-celestial fellow whose demi-celestial assistant makes the premortem mistake of removing Joe Pendleton's soul from Joe Pendleton's body one heart-beat ahead of schedule. He, Messenger 7013, cannot wait for good guy Joe to die. Joe is sore. And rightly so in your eyes, my eyes and the deistic eyes of Mr. Jordan.

Something had to be done about it. And quickly! Find a body, any body in the pink, for Joe's unsheltered soul to occupy. That is the story of "Here Comes Mr. Jordan" into "Heaven Can Wait" into "Wonderful Journey." In the retelling now on Broadway, it is confused at the halfway mark and definitely uncertain as to the outcome. But, more on than off, it remains good, keen metaphysicial fun.

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Ardent Actors

Last night, even more so than last May, Sidney Blackmer, brought skill, force and tenderness to the supermundane trouble-shooter known as Mr. Jordan. He, like the heaven-crossed Joe Pendleton, gives the impression that God may be in His heaven, but all is not right with that other world. Mr. Blackmer's on-stage-characterization is a three-dimensional as Claude Rains' on-screen characterization was two.

As Joe Pendleton, the dead-alive young body-hopper Heaven has not done right by, Donald Murphy comes into his own. Of such stuff as he our future stars are made. Philip Loeb is funnier than ever as Max Levene, the prize fight promoter who takes mitts and metaphysics in his Eighth Avenue stride. Even when he acts down by over-acting. The others are—the others.

Except Wallace Acton, whose Messenger 7013 is a racy combination of brashness, ubiquity and a desire to get along. Fay Baker and Frances Waller, as the piece's heroic and unheroic heroines, do what is asked of them. But what is asked of them is little. Raymond Sovey's settings are surprisingly lacking in imagination. The staging of Frank Emmons Brown is ditto...Like many a real safari, "Wonderful Journey" is most wonderful toward the start.

'WONDERFUL JOURNEY.'

Play by Harry Segall; staged by Frank Emmons Brown; settings designed by Raymond Sovey; costumes by Bianca Stroock; presented by Theron Bamberger in association with Richard Skinner at the Coronet Theater Wednesday evening, December 25, 1946. The cast:

First Escort	Phil Stein
Second Escort	Michael Lewin
Joe Pendleton	Donald Murphy
Messenger 7012	Wallace Acton
Mr. Jordan	Sidney Blackmer
Ames	Richard Temple
Tony Abbott	Hal Conklin
Julia Farnsworth	Fay Baker
Bette Logan	Frances Waller
A Workman	Carmen Costl
Max Levene	Philip Loeb
Susie	Ann Sullivan
Lieut. Williams	Barry Kelley
Plain Clothes Man	Phil Stein
Radio Announcer	Robert Caldwell
Lefty	Richard Tabor
Trainer	Michael Lewin
Handler	Stephen Elliott
Doctor	Robert Caldwell

SYNOPSIS: Act 1—Scene 1, Somewhere in space. Scene 2, The Farnsworth drawing-room. Scene 3, The same. Next morning. Act II—Scene 1, The same. Three weeks later. Scene 2, The same. A week later. Scene 3, A dressing-room underneath the stadium.

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 26, 1946

'Wonderful Journey' Amusing, but Its Love Angle Is Somewhat Weak

By JOHN CHAPMAN

Harry Segall's comedy, "Wonderful Journey," has some wonderful moments and three good performances by Donald Murphy, Philip Loeb and Sidney Blackmer. It is a pleasant entertainment whose handicap is that it asks of an audience more than the audience may be willing to give.

The play is a fantasy, cleverly imagined, about the soul of a prize fighter in search of a body. Inevitably it will be compared with "Outward Bound" and "On Borrowed Time," two other plays in which human beings come into contact and conflict with unearthly messengers of Death. Moviegoers will recall "Wonderful Journey" as Al Hall's fine picture, "Here Comes Mr. Jordan."

And, for the purpose of making a point, I should like to bring in that immortal delight, "Peter Pan." In this gentle classic Peter comes to the footlights and asks if the audience believes in fairies—and the audience cheerfully admits such insanity because by now it has been sold; the play has charmed people into believing.

Love Story Weak.

Last evening at the Coronet Theatre Mr. Segall charmed me into believing a number of things, but one stubborn little corner of my mind refused to let go of reality. I believed everything about the frantic search of a young boxer's soul for a convenient body to keep on fighting in—except the reason for his search. His love for a girl was unconvincing because the romantic details and the girl herself were sketchily drawn, so I couldn't get as worked up over his problem as he himself was.

The boxer, ably and colorfully played by Mr. Murphy, has been snatched by a messenger of Death before he has died. This escort, overzealous because he is new at the job, has seen an airplane crashing and has taken the lad before the ship has hit ground. A serious technical error, for escorts are not supposed to pick up people until they are thoroughly dead.

According to the rules of the Hereafter, the young pugilist has every right to go on living. Mr. Jordan, the boss of the escorts, is morally obligated to straighten out the mess—a pip of a mess, too, for the fighter's manager has already had his body removed from the plane wreck and cremated. Mr. Jordan offers a wide choice of other bodies—people who are destined to die soon.

Loeb Very Amusing.

The boxer picks a Mr. Farnsworth, a rather scoundrelly fellow worth 20 million who at the moment is being murdered in a bath tub by his wife and her lover. He falls in love with a girl Farnsworth has wronged; he pursues his career as a pugilist, even managing to persuade his manager that he isn't the millionaire, at all, but Joe, the kid who got killed in the plane.

Mr. Segall's inventions are imaginative throughout and his comedy is excellent — but the girl doesn't seem to be worth all the fuss and body-hopping that the boy goes through. She could not, at the end, walk down to the foots and ask me if I believed and expect me to holler a "Yes".

The burden of the comedy falls upon the sloping shoulders of Philip Loeb, the fight manager—and never was a burden more cheerfully assumed and delightfully carried. Mr. Loeb's mixups with dead fighters and invisible beings are as comic as James Gleason made them in the picture version.

Mr. Blackmer has the right air of dignified detachment in the role of Mr. Jordan, and Wallace Acton does a nice job as the prissy soul-snatcher who was too eager at his job. Frances Waller is the girl.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 26, 1946

By HOWARD BARNES

Not So Wonderful

A FANTASY has come back to its theatrical roost with more flapping than fanfare at the Coronet. Harry Segall's "Wonderful Journey" is none other than the show which inspired the delightful film, "Here Comes Mr. Jordan." The original play, now unveiled for the first time as a Christmas offering of Theron Bamberger, has moments of bright nonsense. They are made particularly engaging by Philip Loeb's clowning in a lesser role. The fact remains that the material found far richer expression on the screen than it does behind footlights.

* * *

As straight drama "Wonderful Journey" bears an irresolute course between fancy and realism. Segall's central idea is still one to strike sparks in the theater, but they flicker rather dismally in this stage exhibit. The blunder in the hereafter which finds a prize fighter assuming various bodies to fulfill his destiny is apt for make-believe. On several occasions at the Coronet, one may accept the fooling and ride along with it, especially when a doctor is pronouncing a pugilistic champion dead against his vigorous protests. What is wanting is the sustained imagination and decisive acting which the script found in Hollywood.

Irrespective of its metaphysical premises, the work depends on a body of solid human drama to make its "Outward Bound" devices click. There is far too little of this in "Wonderful Journey" on the stage. Although Frank Emmons Brown has striven valiantly in his direction to create the illusion that a fellow can inhabit the body of another and raise a considerable rumpus with a lot of living, the commotion is rarely entrancing. Only in the character of a bewildered prize-fight manager, played so perfectly by Loeb, does the juggling of the cards of existence become a genuine sleight of hand. For much of the time "Wonderful Journey" plods along as though it were relating no more than a dull melange of melodrama and romance.

* * *

The principal roles are not served too ably. Donald Murphy flounders rather badly in the part of the aspirant pug who assumes the shape of a Wall Street tycoon, and then a champion. His colloquies with his celestial guide, Mr. Jordan, are less amusing than they might have been. His performance lacks the essential quality it needed, modulation. Sidney Blackmer is better as Mr. Jordan, playing quietly and with considerable effect, but Fay Baker, as the millionaire's murderous wife and Frances Waller, in the part of the reasonably baffled heroine, do little to give meaning to fancy. Loeb achieves what veteran moviegoers know is inherent in "Wonderful Journey." Perhaps the whole matter should have been left with "Here Comes Mr. Jordan."

The Sun

DECEMBER 26, 1946

'Wonderful Journey', Offered at Coronet, Is a Curiously Listless Fantasy.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

Christmas night, celebrated by a sudden rush of plays to a somewhat startled Broadway, found the comedy called "Wonderful Journey" arriving at the Coronet Theater. This is the season of good will, but today's verdict is adverse. Harry Segall's comedy comes forth as a poky and curiously haphazard blend of realism and fantasy.

"Wonderful Journey" is a piece that has had an interesting pre-Broadway history. It was, in its original form, a quick-selling but unproduced play. In a later phase it was done as a successful film, "Here Comes Mr. Jordan." It reached the summer-theater circuit as a play and now Theron Bamberger, in association with Richard Skinner, offers it as Broadway merchandise.

So here, upon the stage of the Coronet, is the fable of the young prize fighter who dies fifty years ahead of his time and who, because of a celestial error, is given another whirl at life. He takes over the body of another man, a murdered millionaire, and later that of K. O. Murdock, a world champion. And there's romance provided for him at the finish.

I must say with a reluctance that is positively overwhelming that Segall's story was more engaging on the screen than it is on the stage. The scenes of the Coronet's new comedy are not deftly written, the situations are often forced and heavy-handed. But one actor, Philip Loeb, tries to save "Wonderful Journey." He succeeds momentarily.

When the wild-eyed Loeb, playing a frantic and bewildered fight manager, makes his entrance midway in the first act to find the soul of his pug, Joe Pendleton, in the body of the rich scoundrel, Farnsworth, the play comes to life. Loeb does all an actor can to pound fun into it. He reaches into his bag of low-comedy tricks as he goes into his very familiar but still very funny act. He muggs and clowns and careens about the stage. But there is a great deal of "Wonderful Journey," particularly when Loeb is not bounding about, that is quite listless.

Donald Murphy is exuberant and energetic as Joe, who doesn't stay dead. He is frequently ingratiating but for a lot of the time he is given to driving too hard. Sidney Blackmer is bland, quiet and saintly as Mr. Jordan. There are amusing performances from Wallace Acton as Messenger 7013 and Robert Caldwell as a literal-minded man of medicine. The women's roles are sketchily written and not too well played.

Time, patience and money have been spent by Producer Bamberger on "Wonderful Journey," but in stage form Harry Segall's fantasy just doesn't come off.

The New York Times

DECEMBER 26, 1946

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

Since "Wonderful Journey" went contrary to nature and appeared on the screen before the stage, everything, including drama criticism, is now at sixes and sevens. One of the chief items in the American credo is that good plays are always translated into horrible movies. But it now seems fairly obvious that one mediocre play was translated into a memorable motion picture. Live and learn!

The motion picture was "Here Comes Mr. Jordan," that played fast and loose with death, life and bodies four or five years ago. Harry Segall's stage play, from which "Here Comes Mr. Jordan" was derived, made its somewhat tardy appearance at the Coronet last evening, with Sidney Blackmer representing that bourne from which, as far as this department knows, only one traveler has ever returned.

He is Joe Pendleton, a promising pugilist, who is transported to heaven fifty years too soon by an overzealous attendant. Since heaven, unlike other places recently searched, never commits an injustice, Mr. Jordan, in charge of heavenly operations, tries to find some available body in which Joe can continue his career as a fighter. One Farnsworth, a millionaire, is just being drowned by his wife and her lover, and Joe is stuffed inside Farnsworth for a month. As Farnsworth he falls in love with Bette Logan; and as Farnsworth he is just about to resume his career as a pugilist when Farnsworth sends up an effective squawk from hell. That's how it turns out that Joe's spirit performs another transmigration into the body of a champion fighter who has just been shot through the heart by gangsters to keep him from winning the world's championship.

In "Here Comes Mr. Jordan" this fantastic legend resulted in a tender, imaginative screen play that had overtones of loveliness. But the melancholy fact seems to be that Mr. Segall's stage play, "Wonderful Journey," achieves this distinction only in the last scene. When Joe's spirit finally comes to rest inside the body of a world's champion and the girl he loves recognizes his spirit in his eyes, "Wonderful Journey" is also tender and imaginative and finds the response it seeks in the heart of a playgoer. But the early parts of the play are hardly more than a humorously stated riddle in an ordinary crime story. As a writer Mr. Segall does not get very far away from the supernatural situation that was nothing more than

an interesting dramatic device in "Here Comes Mr. Jordan."

* * *

On the whole, the performance is no great shakes, particularly in the central part of Joe Pendleton. Excepting in that evocative final scene, Donald Murphy acts like a willing boy—blustering and gesticulating, but never getting inside the character. Sidney Blackmer acts the inscrutable though kindly Mr. Jordan with great tact—ignoring without forgetting the otherworldliness of the character, and avoiding the mawkishness that a mediocre actor would cram into the role.

The best performance is Phil Loeb's. As the fight manager who is bewildered by Joe's transmigrations and who is yet smart enough to take advantage of a good thing when it comes his way, Mr. Loeb is consistently funny. He has all kinds of grimaces, feints and double-takes to build up a good part into rich comedy acting. Mr. Loeb has wasted a lot of our time by not appearing regularly on the stage.

As designer, Raymond Sovey has done a first-rate job of defining one scene in the upper regions that catches the droll mood of the script. His drawing-room for a malefactor of great wealth is satisfactory and his sharply lighted dressing room for the prize ring is vigorously imagined. But the most wonderful journey Mr. Segall's play has made was to Hollywood, where it bloomed as "Here Comes Mr. Jordan."

PM Exclusive

DECEMBER 27, 1946

Kronenberger

Here Comes Mr. Jordan Looking Pretty Seedy

PM Reviews

Wonderful Journey is the play from which the movie, *Here Comes Mr. Jordan*, was made. I never saw *Mr. Jordan*, but something so highly popular and highly praised must have tossed far more of *Wonderful Journey* into the waste-basket than it ever transferred to the screen. For *Wonderful Journey* is a fantasy that doesn't only lack wings. It even lacks feet; far from soaring, it never really manages to stand upright. It is a sort of harmless, but not quite painless, bore.

Mr. Segall, as movie-goers may recall, has told how an over-hasty celestial agent snatches up a young prize-fighter before he is dead. By the time the mistake is discovered, the fighter's body has been cremated, but his soul is still 50 years distant from Heaven, and he must find another body in which to pass those 50 years on earth. The best that Heaven, or Mr. Segall, can find for him is the body of an unsavory millionaire who has just been murdered. In his new get-up, the pug pursues his ring career, rights some of his predecessor's wrongs, and falls heavily in love.

But the defunct millionaire raises such a howl in Hell that our hero has to find another body to live in, and this time becomes a big-shot boxer who has also been bumped off. Here, for 50 years at any rate, he can stay put—with the right girl for company.

* * *

Mr. Segall seems to have exhausted his imagination in thinking up his fantasy. The working out, save for a moment here and there, is wholly pedestrian when it is not downright lame. Whether *Wonderful Journey* was believable wouldn't matter much if it were beguiling enough; but for me it almost constantly falls flat. The jokes are appropriate without seeming funny. The situations are old without seeming fresh. Furthermore, no matter how often our young prize-fighter changes his skin, he never seems like anything but Donald Murphy; and Donald Murphy brings little to his acting beyond good will. Even the surest-fire elements in the play—the humor arising out of the boxer's behaving so unlike the people he is supposed to be, or out of his talking to heavenly agents that are invisible to every one else—give off almost no sparks. The most that can be said for the play is that it has a sort of professional air about it. But hack plodding can be a lot duller than amateur high spirits.

The only high spirits visible in *Wonderful Journey* are provided by Philip Loeb as the boxer's manager. Letting his part go hang, Mr. Loeb cuts up with refreshing effect. Otherwise the production pretty much mirrors the play. Sidney Blackmer, as the Saint-Peterish Mr. Jordan, has the discretion to act quietly, but the part is a bore; and the other parts are acted as they are written, without flavor.

—Louis Kronenberger

New York World-Telegram

DECEMBER 26, 1946

Mr. Jordan Returns Again In 'Wonderful Journey'

By ROBERT BAGAR.

There was a good deal of horseplay in "Wonderful Journey," latest tenant of the Coronet Theater. Harry Segall's comedy, which—contrary to all the rules—had first been produced in the movies under the title "Here Comes Mr. Jordan"—teeters between this and the afterlife, in the saga of one Joe Pendleton, a pugilist. He, dying an untimely death, is returned to earth to live out the rest of his predestined span, 50 years, in somebody's else's bodily temple.

"Wonderful Journey," as becomes quite clear from the start, is a farce, satisfied to produce laughs through its brash and raucous type of humor. The supernatural gets no more attention from the author than his particular objectives of plot require. There is no speculation about it, no commentary, no curiosity, excepting, perhaps, in the mind of the auditor.

Not Really a Fantasy.

Because of all that, the piece may not truly be described as a fantasy, for fantasy conjures up qualities of imagination, of delicacy, lightness and grace that are alien to this work. A kind of rough-hewn fancy it does have and, too, one may not ignore entirely the cleverness of the main device, that is, the flesh-to-spirit-to-flesh migrations.

Yet one leaves it hardly touched by anything, comedy or no comedy, and this is especially regrettable, in view of the quite obvious fact that Mr. Segall had lordly opportunities here.

This reporter did not see the film made of the story, although he was made aware by numerous others who did, of certain shining attributes it possessed that were scarcely noticeable last night. Among these might be mentioned the adroit handling of the theme, the moments of tender beauty interspersed between those of comedy and, in general, the subtlety of the treatment.

Joe Pendleton, our traveler, is about as dumb a gent as ever tossed a padded glove. He is totally lacking anything like a brain; he skitters and shouts, as he speeds from the material life to the spiritual and back without the slightest interest in the mechanics of things, and his only concerns are winning the championship and—a close second—winning a girl he first meets while he is in the astral state, so to speak.

Donald Murphy did what he could with the part. He is personable, and he is capable, one supposes, of more expression than he revealed in the rather inhibiting script. Of course, he got laughs, as anybody else would from the ludicrous nature of the boxer's position.

In fact, there was just too much shouting. Even Philip Loeb, as a fight manager, found it expedient to go the stentorian route when he didn't need to. Mr. Loeb, however, was a competent comedian and secure in the knowledge of his own capacities most of the time.

Mr. Jordan Whimsical.

Another artist who did commendable work was Sidney Blackmer, the Mr. Jordan of the piece, who contributed much to the role of a celestial delegate by the dignity of his bearing and the often whimsical and arch delivery of his lines.

Lastly, the three sets—"Somewhere in Space," "The Farnsworth Drawing Room" and "A Dressing Room underneath the Grandstand"—were all excellent.

New York Post

DECEMBER 26, 1946

Segall Play Is Mild Fantasy Based on an Old Movie Hit

By Richard Watts Jr.

Since I seem to be one of the few people in the world who never saw a famous motion picture some six years ago called "Here Comes Mr. Jordan," I am unable to tell how closely last night's play known as "Wonderful Journey" approaches it in letter, spirit or quality. It would be my guess, however, that the poor, battered old theatre now faces the ultimate indignity not only of being forced to go to ancient movies for its material but of being unable to equal them in persuasion or effectiveness.

At least, according to all accounts, "Here Comes Mr. Jordan" was quite something as a motion picture, gay, imaginative, touching and generally delightful. Ever those of us who hate to concede that Hollywood can do anything better than Broadway must break down and admit that Harry Segall's stage version of the tale has little of the magic presumably possessed by its cinema original. It is by no means a mess, but it just isn't very good.

The chances being that you are among the vast majority of mankind which appears to have seen and loved the film, it will not be necessary to go into many details about the plot of "Wonderful Journey." It may be enough to say that it is an amiable little fantasy about a dashing young prizefighter who, by the incompetence of one of the agents of the hereafter, is brought to his death fifty years before the time that had been set for him.

Mr. Jordan

You will doubtless remember that the best thing Mr. Jordan, the benign gentleman who presides over such matters, could think up to remedy the error was to send the fighter back to earth in the body of a dubious financier who was just about to be murdered by his evil wife and her accomplice. I hope it will not be too confusing to any who happen to share my ignorance of the picture to add that it is necessary for the luckless young man to get into still a third body before justice and love conquer.

If this sounds complicated, it is my fault, rather than the play's, since it must be said for Mr. Segall that at least he makes his fantasy simple enough. He doesn't bother much with trickery and the heavenly characters that can be seen by the fighter and the audience but not by the other characters, as well as the leaps made by the hero from dead boxer to financier to another fighter, are not really complex.

A couple of other virtues must be granted to him. Despite the several violent deaths that mark the action, the general effect is by no means gruesome. Best of all, there are a number of scenes, particularly when Philip Loeb is enlivening the proceedings, which are authentically amusing, and the ending succeeds in being rather touching. As I have said, "Wonderful Journey" is not a mess.

It merely happens that, save for the occasional bright moments, the fantasy has a way of being strangely flat and pedestrian. The writing has little life, charm or comic raciness about it, and the characters are without richness or flavor. Then, too, there is an unfortunate lack of persuasiveness in the story.

I hasten to add that this has nothing to do with the fantastic story the author has to tell. In the interest of farcical fantasy, it is quite easy to accept all the premises of the plot. But where, having accepted them, one has the right to expect that the resulting complications should have a sort of crazy logic of their own, they seem too woodenly fabricated for comfort.

By far the most valuable performance is that of Mr. Loeb as the hero's bewildered manager. It may be vaudeville rather than straight dramatic acting but it is shrewd, inventive and very funny. Donald Murphy, who is an engaging young actor, is a pleasant hero and plays his final scene quite movingly, and Sidney Blackmer is wisely not too pompous as the heavenly Mr. Jordan. Fay Baker is helpfully cold, beautiful and sinister as the nasty and homicidal wife. "Wonderful Journey" is by no means one of the drama's triumphs over the Hollywood interlopers.

"Androcles and the Lion" & "Pound on Demand"

New York Post

DECEMBER 20, 1946

American Repertory Presents Minor Shaw and O'Casey

By Richard Watts Jr.

Two lesser charades by a couple of antic Irishmen were presented last night by the bright pupils of Miss Webster's School for Boys and Girls. To put it in slightly more formal terms, the industrious American Repertory Theatre offered, as its fourth bill of the season, Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion" and O'Casey's little known "Pound on Demand," and did them gaily but with a curious air of high-school theatricals clinging to the proceedings.

The atmosphere of the local dramatic society was so evident that there is a temptation to add that the players took their parts well. It should be added at once, though, that this amateur quality, while it has its accompanying defects, is justified in at least one way. Both comedies reveal their distinguished authors in their most informal and least Olympian moods.

The O'Casey contribution need detain no one long. An emphatically minor little vaudeville by one of the greatest of modern dramatists, "Pound on Demand" is a bit of slapstick about a pair of drunks trying to cash a check in a post office. It gives Ernest Truex and Philip Bourneuf a chance to stagger about the stage and Miss Webster an opportunity to don the makeup of a forbidding spinster, but it isn't very funny.

Shaw's Play

The Shaw play is obviously of far greater merit. It is one of its author's minor works and it is rather a desultory sort of extravaganza concerning primitive Christianity. Furthermore, the most fascinatingly ironic thing about it is of no help on the stage, since it merely consists of the contrast between the gently playful little comedy it is and the monumentally brilliant preface that Shaw wrote to go with the published text. But it certainly has its points.

One of them seemed to me rather lost last night. The character of Ferrovius, the fierce and mighty warrior who tries so earnestly to be a meek and forgiving Christain martyr, when all the time he is so sorely tempted to turn and destroy his persecutors, is one of the most appealing that Shaw ever wrote. Victor Jory looks quite impressive in the part, but there is a lot more to this splendid giant than he ever realized in his characterization.

I must confess, too, that I was just a bit disappointed with Philip Bourneuf, who is in general the most effective actor in the new repertory company. His Caesar has its proper comic moments but on the whole he has brought less style and insight to his portrayal than is his custom. He isn't bad, but he isn't as good as we have come to expect.

Ernest Truex is, of course, Androcles, the tailor who loved animals and removed the thorn from the lion's foot, and it is a role that was inevitable for him. Perhaps he fitted into it a bit too easily, since he is inclined to emphasize the innocent sweetness of the little man, but it is a helpful performance.

In lesser roles, Richard Waring is well cast as the sympathetic Roman captain and June Duprez, while somewhat declamatory, is satisfactory enough as Livinia, the Christian girl. Eli Wallach seems just right as the most disreputable of the Christians. I thought that Miss Webster's direction and Wolfgang Roth's sets added to the charade-like quality of the evening. The lion, of course, had his usual triumph.

As Shavian comment on the early Christians and their persecutors, "Androcles" may depend on its preface, rather than the play itself, for significance, but it has its share of characteristically shrewd observations, sagacious humor and amusing raillery, as well as a curious touch of sweetness. I wish it were better done, but it is still a lot of fun.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 20, 1946

= *By* HOWARD BARNES =

Cause for Roaring

THE American Repertory Theater has gone to Shaw for its latest production and come forth with an enchanting revival of "Androcles and the Lion." With Sean O'Casey's slapstick sketch, "Pound on Demand" as a curtain-raiser, it makes for gay and disarming entertainment at the International Theater. The comedy of Caesar, the Christian martyrs and a grateful lion has been given beguiling accents in a stylish presentation. The company, spearheaded brilliantly by Ernest Truex, is beautifully balanced and assured. With this offering the group has found itself. It has not only wrought a bewitching piece of theater; it has justified its purpose and made bright its promise.

* * *

There is nothing of vaguely momentuous significance about the play itself. Written by Bernard Shaw when he was well into middle age some decades ago, it is tongue-in-cheek from start to finish. But the jester's bells ring merrily in "Androcles and the Lion." Whether the British upper classes or religion, wedlock or fighting are the butts of his witty commentary, the lines are rich with laughter and wisdom, while the dramatic structure is imaginatively amusing. Farce can afford to be slight when it is scintillating and sustained. The new show on Columbus Circle makes capital of the very lack of pretensions in two delightful acts. Company and material reach a felicitious meeting ground in the offering.

* * *

Truex, who has been content with lesser roles in the three earlier productions of the repertory group, takes over this time, but with the shyest of authority. His Androcles is a superbly modulated comic figure, as he yanks a thorn from a lion's foot in the jungle prologue, holds his doomed fellow-Christians in line as they are about to enter the Coliseum with wavering faith and finds himself in the role of a pal rather than a mince pie when he is tossed to a rampant king of beasts. Never over-playing, but always dominating the five scenes, he creates a priceless bit of make-believe. It is in his performance that Margaret Webster's inspired direction and the accompanying embellishments of the production find a steady focal point.

Miss Webster has used it to exploit every facet of the piece triumphantly. She has Androcles and the lion waltzing nonsensically, keeps the play in action through the most static stretches of dialogue and handles the climax, with Caesar, the Greek tailor and his jungle friend in an absurd triangle in a brilliant mood of travesty. Victor Jory is fine as Ferrovius, who has a constant conflict between his love of Mars and Jesus. Eli Wallach does a striking job with the part of Spintho. Richard Waring is good as the Roman captain, June Duprez was never more lovely looking than she is as Lavinia and Philip Boerneuf makes a wonderful Caesar. Meanwhile John Becher deserves a big hand for his playing of the lion, Remo Bufano for his masks, Marc Blitzstein for his incidental music and Wolfgang Roth for his sets and costumes.

* * *

"Pound on Demand" serves little more than to mark time before "Androcles and the Lion" goes on. O'Casey has merely introduced a couple of drunks into a postoffice, where one tries fruitlessly to sign a money order. The Irish playwright is not at his most eloquent in this skit. Jory's staging helps a lot and once again Truex is immense as the besotted bum who cannot sign his name. It serves its purpose. "Androcles and the Lion" is the play at the International and it is one not to be missed.

'Androcles and the Lion'

The comedy in two acts by Bernard Shaw was presented last night, as part of a double bill, at the International Theatre by the American Repertory Theatre. Margaret Webster directed, the music was by Marc Blitzstein, the sets and costumes were by Wolfgang Roth, and the animal masks were by Remo Bufano.

THE CAST:

Lion	John Becher
Megaera	Marion Evenden
Androcles	Ernest Truex
Beggar	Arthur Keegan
Centurion	John Straub
Captain	Richard Waring
Lavinia	June Duprez
Lentulus	Eugene Stuckmann
Metellus	Angus Cairns
Ferrovius	Victor Jory
Spintho	Eli Wallach
Ox-driver	Robert Rawlins
Call-boy	Arthur Keegan
Secutor	Efrem Zimbalist, Jr.
Retiarius	William Windom
Editor	Raymond Greenleaf
Menagerie Keeper	Ed Woodhead
Caesar	Philip Bourneuf

Synopsis—Prologue: A jungle. Act. I: The outskirts of Rome. Act II: Scene 1. The Coliseum. Entrance to the Arena—behind Emperor's box. Scene 2. The arena. Scene 3. Same as Act 2, Scene 1.

'Pound on Demand'

A comedy in one act by Sean O'Casey preceded the above. It was staged by Victor Jory and the set and costumes were by Wolfgang Roth.

THE CAST:

Girl	Cavada Humphrey
Jerry	Philip Bourneuf
Sammy	Ernest Truex
Woman	Margaret Webster
Policeman	Eugene Stuckmann

Synopsis—Scene: A postoffice

Journal-American

DECEMBER 20, 1946

American Repertory Offers Double Feature

By ROBERT GARLAND

If you delve deep down into Noah Webster's word-book you discover that "amateur" means, among other things, doing what comes happily. Last night on Columbus Circle, with Head Mistress Eva Le Gallienne off somewhere on a holiday, her American Repertory sophomores had a grand time cutting up and carrying on, first in Sean O'Casey's "Pound on Demand," then in Bernard Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion." Results were amateur in the deep down, which is the desirable, meaning of the word.

It's true that Teacher Margaret Webster showed up fleetingly as The Woman in the comic curtain-raiser and that Teacher Cheryl Crawford was present in spirit as the Managing Director. But once Miss Webster in the flesh had gone off to join Miss Le Gallienne and Miss Crawford in the spirit, the boys and girls of the A. R. T. took things into their own talents and had themselves an uninhibited Shavian shakedown. Especially the prize pupil from Kansas City who is little Ernest Truex.

Last evening was Ernie's in the International Theatre. In both "Pound on Demand," which was an incident rather than a one-acter, and in "Androcles and the Lion," which was gift-wrapped, and presented as if it were an imported Christmas pantomime, was it his. And first-night playgoers enjoyed the player's taking-over almost as much as the player did. Thanks to the importance of being Ernest, Androcles was once more keen Christian fun.

* * *

Quick O'Casey

The curtain-raiser which preceeded Bernard Shaw's highbrow lowbrow spoofery about the tailor and the lion was done and gone with before you had time to remind yourself that the author of this "Pound on Demand" was also responsible for one or two, perhaps three, of the finest comedies of our tragic time. Of "Juno and the Paycock," which came first; "The Plough and the Stars," which came second, and "Red Roses For Me," which, to the Island of Manhattan, has not yet come at all.

If you know your local postal system as well as Mr. O'Casey gives the impression of knowing his, you'll agree that post-offices, pen-points and people, are pretty much alike the world over, whether they're on a side-street there in Dublin or on a side-street here in New York. Postmasters and their hired help everywhere enjoy, in their small bureaucratic way, what Hamlet referred to as "the insolence of office."

Under the insolent eye of Cavada Humphrey as postal clerk somewhere in Ireland, Philip Bourneuf and Ernest Truex are a diverting pair of Celtic alcoholics. Especially Mr. Truex's Sammy, the old Irish soak. And Margaret Webster, making her fleeting appearance as a disapproving Woman, is their ardent on-stage stooge. The four of them, augumented by Eugene Stuckmann as Policeman, stirred up no little bit of laughter, setting the mood for what was to come.

* * *

And Short Shaw

What did come was the Bernard Shaw "Androcles and the Lion" which, to quote the playwright, was written to show the author of "Peter Pan" just how a play for children should be handled. And it was Mr. Shaw himself who, at its initial dress rehearsal, transformed the play from a comedy into an extravaganza. Yet, he warned when arranging for the first American production (1915), "it will fail unless presented as a great religious drama — with leonine relief."

More than likely that's what the American Repertoryians had in mind last night at the International, with Head Mistress Le Gallienne and her fine female associates off somewhere on a holiday and the young folk taking over. Little Ernest Truex was at his big-boy best as the tailor who loved a lion. John Becher, as the kindly king of beasts, met his consistently half way. The more-than-human lion-head supplied by Remo Bufano had much to do with Tommy's leonine relief.

The surrounding players played as if "Androcles and the Lion" were the imported Christmas pantomime I've mentioned and they were playing it for love rather than for money. Or like amateurs, if you remember, doing what came happily. The designs by Wolfgang Roth and the music by Marc Blitzstein were light, right and impressive...Last night, the electric lighted weather report above Columbus Circle said "Cloudy." But inside, where two comedies were showing, the American Repertory Theatre Company had cheered up, if not cleared up tremendously.

The New York Times

DECEMBER 20, 1946

THE PLAY

By BROOKS ATKINSON

In case anyone feels like laughing, he is hereby directed to appear at the International Theatre in Columbus Circle. For the American Repertory Theatre, which already has three productions on its schedule, made room last evening for a performance of Shaw's incomparable "Androcles and the Lion." According to the biographers, it shocked theatregoers thirty-three years ago—just before the first World War, incidentally—because it seemed like a lampoon of the Christian religion. It did not shock anyone very noticeably when the Theatre Guild revived it twenty-one years ago.

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Now, at a moment when people need not be squeamish about matters of decorum, anybody ought to see that it lampoons the world and idolizes the Christians. And since it was written by a man of pure intellect, it portrays religious faith with understanding and respect, to say nothing of Christian humor. Curious—is it not?—that Shaw, the witty iconoclast, has portrayed religious faith more admirably than any of his softer hearted contemporaries. His "Saint Joan" is the masterpiece. His Lavinia and Androcles in this ironic comedy come out of the same clear and courageous mental attitude that understands purity of faith and makes wry faces at the mockery of the world.

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But let's not get off the main points. For the genius of "Androcles and the Lion" is that it has the grace and inventiveness of a fairy story (something you don't expect from a caustic intellectual), excellent and consistent characters and brilliant logic. The logic is the element that makes it so funny. If Shaw were literal-minded, this comedy of Christian fanatics in the days of Rome would be a harrowing tragedy. But the logic of faith and also the logic of the play make "Androcles" a complete delight.

They are performing it admirably up at the Circle. As Androcles, Ernest Truex's soft, diminutive, wandering manner is not only pleasant comedy but a shrewd analyses of the role. As Shaw very well knew, Androcles is the apotheosis of simple Christian faith, and that is the way Mr. Truex plays him. June Duprez's Lavinia is also well planned and well taken — attractive and humorous, brave and qet girlish. Perhaps there is more passion in the part than Miss Duprez disclosed last evening; as she continues to play the part perhaps she will find that it has more depth of human terror. But the design she has made for it is already a good one, that communicate Lavinia's distinction as a rare human being.

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Victor Jory's sinewy and fiery Ferrobius is also an excellent portrait of a simple-minded, unconquerable man who means what he believes, and, for that reason, confounds ordinary people who have good manners. Caesar is tartly acted by Philip Bourneuf, whose sense of humor extends to his fingers and toes. Remo Bufano has constructed a most disarming and lovable lion. Inside the head and costume John Becker is giving a most engaging performance of leonine drolleries.

Abandoning the worn concepts of decoration, Wolfgang Roth has designed a lean, jaunty yet colorful production, almost if not quite so light and pointed as Shaw's barbed phrases. To anyone who wants to listen to the lines, not so much can be said for Marc Blitzstein's musical flourishes. They blast the dialogue off the stage.

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The performance begins with a curtain-raiser, "Pound on Demand," by Sean O'Casey. It is the first new O'Casey drama done here since "Within the Gates" of 1934. Strictly a vaudeville, it sketches in an episode of two drunken blighters floundering around in a post office. Let's not pretend that the Columbus Circlers are playing it even acceptably.

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 20, 1946

Shaw's 'Androcles' a Delightful Romp for American Rep Company

By JOHN CHAPMAN

The American Repertory Theatre last evening did exactly what it should have done at this time. It had some fun. Starting with a blackout about two drunks written by Sean O'Casey, the company finished in high spirits by making a delightful romp out of Shaw's waggish little comedy, "Androcles and the Lion."

This was the right move at the right time, for this fourth item in the repertoire makes a contrast with the sonorities of "Henry VIII," the lugubriosities of "John Gabriel Borkman" and the niceties of "What Every Woman Knows." It also offers something for a fine comedian, Ernest Truex, to be funny in, and presents Victor Jory in his most enjoyable role.

There were some complaints last evening that a one-acter of more substance than Mr. O'Casey's "Pound on Demand" might have been found for a curtain-raiser, but I was not dissatisfied. A curtain-raiser is a curtain-raiser. This particular one is about a pair of stews (played by Mr. Truex and Philip Bourneuf) trying to cash a postal savings order in an Irish postoffice. Either of James Barton's vaudeville acts—"The Pest" or the one about the man bitten by a mad dog —is better, but if I can't have Barton I'll settle for O'Casey.

An Enjoyable Satire.

Mr. Shaw's short play, which is about a third as long as the preface he wrote for it, has satirical bite. Its own age—34—does not matter, for its subject is Christianity at the time when it was a new thing whose practitioners were thrown to lions or killed by gladiators in the Roman Forum. It is as enjoyable now as it must have been in 1912.

The repertory company does well with it, on the whole, and Wolfgang Roth's settings are perfect, having more humor than any others I've seen this season. Mr. Truex, the meek bantam, is ideally cast as the lion-taming Androcles. In the role of Ferrovius, the ill-tempered strong man who finally conquers his Christianity much as the late Don Marquis once conquered his will-power, Mr. Jory reveals comic powers I did not expect to find in him.

There are some good minor performances by Marion Evensen, Eugene Stuckmann and Eli Wallach, and John Becher, caparisoned in a fine Remo Bufano lion suit and mask, makes a tender-hearted and agile beast. Richard Waring and June Duprez, as the Captain and Lavinia, are all right, if not exactly imbued with the Shavian spirit. Mr. Bourneuf makes a capital Caesar.

Margaret Webster has directed "Androcles," and Marc Blitzstein has provided some trumpet music here and there. Last night's audience at the International Theatre enjoyed the lark very much.

New York World-Telegram

DECEMBER 20, 1946

Repertory Presents A Night of Hilarity

By WILLIAM HAWKINS.

The American Repertory Theater makes its new production of "Androcles and the Lion" the closest thing a grownup can get around New York to recapturing the thrill of seeing Santa Claus for the first time at one of the major department stores.

Shaw's play is hilarious, and much of it is as immediately biting as if it had been written by a veteran of an occupational army.

It swings along gaily under Margaret Webster's keen direction, and the physical production of Wolfgang Roth is at once heady and effervescent.

The performances are spirited. Though he must divide honors with Victor Jory and Philip Bourneuf, it is Ernest Truex, who for the first time since the company started, really makes it his evening.

A Lovable Glow.

As the timid Christian whose love for animals is reciprocated in his good stead, Truex gives the comedy a lovable glow. His capacity for suggesting tired pathos and high wit at the same time makes the whole satire recognizable.

Here he is a harassed little Christian, driven by his faith from Rome to the jungle. His mighty wife makes the meeting with the Lion only a questionable alternative.

Captured and returned as fodder to the Coliseum, his reunion with the Lion, whose jungle injury he had healed, is a bright